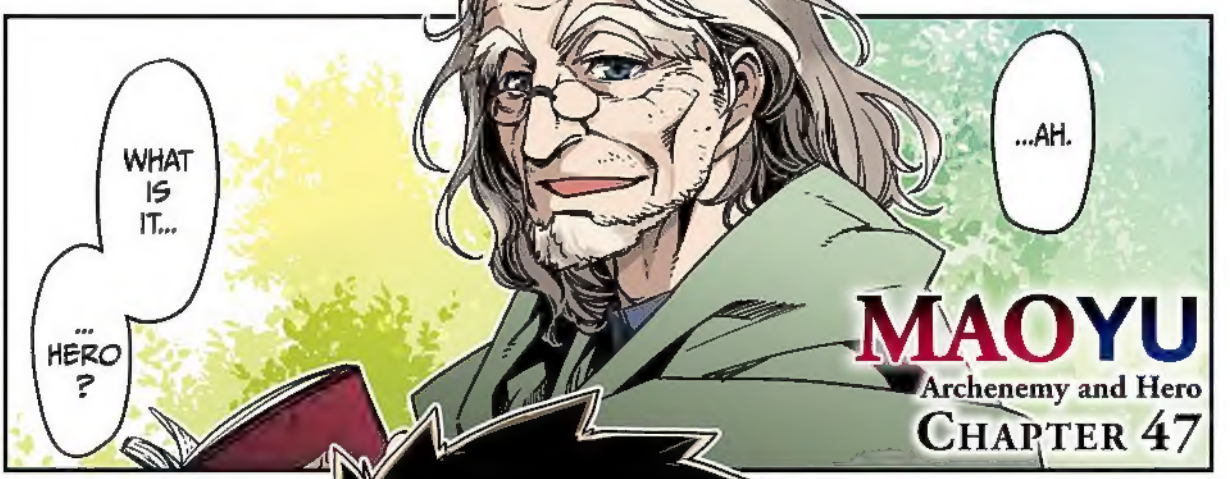
Art by
AKIRA ISHIDA

Original Work by
MAMARE TOUNO

Character Design by KEINOJOU MIZUTAMA and toi8

RUSTLE
GRAMPS!
GRAMPS!
FWOOSH
DASH


...AH.
WHAT IS IT...
...HERO?
MAOYU
Archenemy and Hero
CHAPTER 47

I CAUGHT SOME FISH!
LET'S EAT!

Archenemy and Hero **CHAPTER 47**

From This Point On, I Will Call Myself This

Art by
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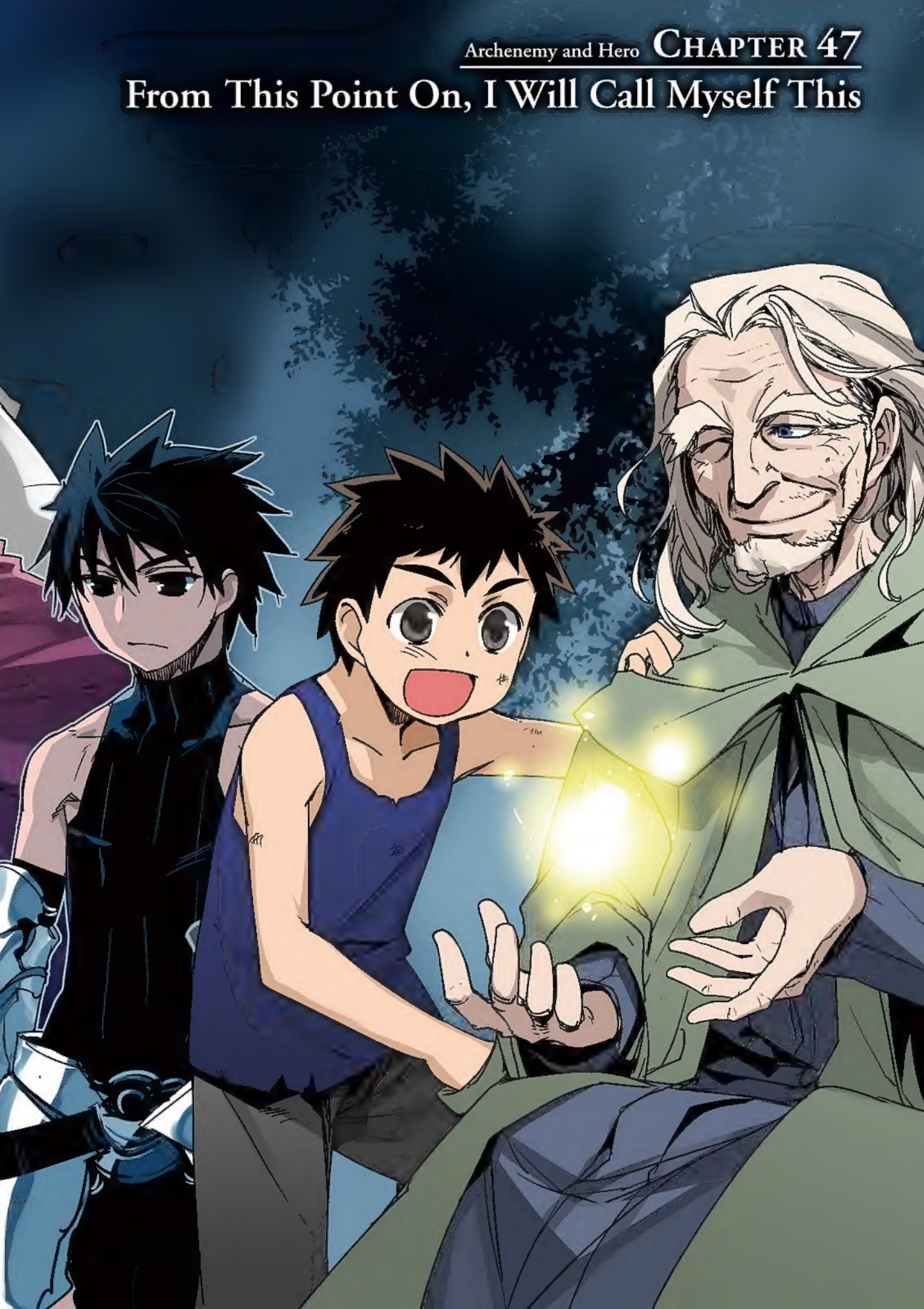
MAOYU
Archenemy and Hero
"Become mine, Hero" "I refuse!"

Archenemy and Hero CHAPTER 47

From This Point On, I Will Call Myself This



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MAOYU
Archenemy and Hero
"Become mine, Hero"
"I refuse!"

MAOYU

VOLUME 15

Art by **AKIRA ISHIDA**

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CHAPTER 47 Archenemy and Hero 001

From This Point On, I Will Call Myself This

CHAPTER 48 Archenemy and Hero 047

For Tomorrow!

CHAPTER 49 Archenemy and Hero 103

Have Hope For Your Story That Will Someday Begin

MAOYU

Archenemy and Hero

"Become mine, Hero" "I refuse!"

Volume 15

Art by
AKIRA ISHIDA

Original Work by
MAMARE TOUNO

Character Design by KEINOJOU MIZUTAMA and toi8

COLUMN PAGE
Daisuke Takenouchi (Recca-sha)
Masataka Nomura

Archbishop, leader of the Church of Holy Light. Mass produced muskets allow for rapid training of soldiers, and the Holy Key Expeditionary Force mobilizes a massive force an unprecedented 300,000 strong. This force mobilized to acquire the Holy Relic begins their invasion of the Spirit World at the Battle of the Squill Fields. A contingent of 50,000 is dispatched to the Blue Demon lands to secure supplies, and the remaining forces head for Gateway City, where humans and demons coexist. The 60,000 soldiers of the demon army take the field in an attempt to reduce their enemy's numbers, but they suffer 30,000 casualties in the face of the Expeditionary Force's saturation attack and retreat. The Demon Queen and Duke Silver Tiger return from the Human World, and through their efforts total annihilation is avoided, but Duke Silver Tiger falls in battle as well while protecting the Demon Queen.

As Gateway City faces grave danger, the Older Maid Sister confronts the Royal Prince Marshal, who has arrived in Blue Demon lands. In the Human World, the Female Knight departs with convent knights and volunteer soldiers in tow, and the Southern Confederation decides to dispatch its own force. The important figures begin gathering in the Spirit World...

It has been three years since the dramatic meeting of the Demon Queen and Hero. Through their efforts that began in the Human World's Overwinter Village, the world has changed dramatically. Thanks to the technology and knowledge introduced by the Demon Queen in the Southern Kingdoms of the Winter, Iron, and Ice Kingdoms the lives of the people have improved considerably. These three empowered nations establish their independence from the Holy Kingdom and Central Church of Holy Light dominating the continent, and later form the Southern Confederation with five nations located on the east end of the continent and seven sovereign cities.

WHY NOT SPLIT OUR ARMY IN TWO?
FIGHTING ON TWO FRONTS IS GENERALLY A BAD IDEA...
...BUT FORTUNATELY, THE HOLY KEY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HAS ENOUGH SOLDIERS TO PULL IT OFF.

Meanwhile, in the Spirit World, an assassination attempt on the Demon Queen's life at the major demon conference known as the Kurultai strengthens the bonds between the chiefs of the most powerful clans. Subjugating the Blue Demons that invaded the surface and maintaining freshly opened roads gives rise to an unprecedented level of cooperation reaching beyond clan lines. Additionally, with the Hero's mediation, the Southern Confederation agrees to an audience with the Fairy Queen, who is representing the Spirit World, where they sign a ceasefire agreement between humans and demons and take a large step toward an eventual peace treaty.

The Demon Queen more or less anticipated these changes in the world. However, the musket technology leaked during this process leads to new military organization and the invention of a new weapon, the cannon, in the Holy Kingdom, giving rise to an unexpected problem: the Third Holy Key Expeditionary Force incited by the

SUMMARY OF MAOYU VOLUME 14

Lectures on Archenemy and Hero
Outline of volume.14

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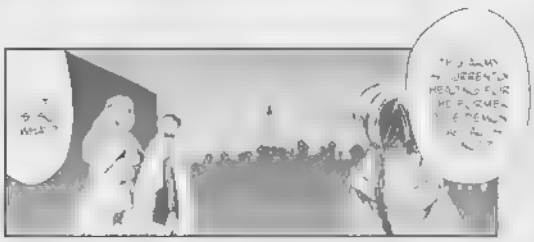

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A young man working alongside the Demon Queen. After learning the true nature of the Demon Queen and Hero from the Female Magician, he acts to avoid the future of destruction he has discovered.

THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL

Younger brother of the Holy Kingdom's king. The continent's greatest hero commands the Third Holy Key Expeditionary Force.

THE LILY KNIGHT CAPTAIN

Captain of the Lily Knights who serve the Archbishop. She pledges her loyalty to the teachings of the Church of Holy Light and the Archbishop.

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Young hero of the Central Continent and king of the Mist Kingdom. He commands the front lines of the Holy Key Expeditionary Force.

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Leader of the Church of Holy Light that worships the spirit of light. He incited the Third Holy Key Expeditionary Force in search of the Holy Relic

THE YOUNG MUSICIAN

A Forest Song Clan girl educated by the Crimson Scholar. She has concealed her identity and infiltrated the Holy Key Expeditionary Force.

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An Ogre Call boy educated by the Crimson Scholar. He built sturdy walls for Gateway City.

THE FAIRY QUEEN
Chief of the Fairy Clan.

THE STEEL GENERAL
Chief of the Mechanical Clan

THE GIANT COUNT
Chief of the Giant Clan.

DUKE SILVER TIGER
Chief of the Fanged Demon Clan

THE SEAL KING OF THE BLUE DEMONS
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THE OGRE CALL PRIESTESS
Chief of the Ogre Call Clan

THE PATTERNED CHIEF
Chief of the Humanoid Demon Clan.

ARCHDUKE FIRE DRAGON
Chief of the Dragon Clan

THE DEMON QUEEN

Using the knowledge she gained from the Outer Library, the queen of demons seeks to reform the world. For the futures of both demon and humankind, she is currently working to protect Gateway City.

THE CHIEF MAID

The Demon Queen's close adviser. She desires happiness for the Demon Queen and works to make the Demon Queen's dream come true.

THE OLDER MAID SISTER

A girl who previously worked in the Demon Queen's mansion Of her own volition, she has chosen to act independently with a mercenary company

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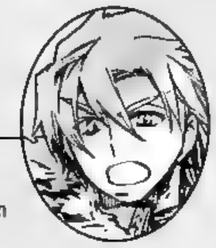
One of the Hero's former traveling companions. Acting independently, she uses her knowledge to assist the Hero.

THE YOUNGER MAID SISTER

The Older Maid Sister's younger sister. Her gluttony opens her eyes to the world of cooking. She is currently training in the Iron Kingdom.



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King of the Winter Kingdom. After breaking away from the Central Kingdoms, he established the Southern Confederation with other nations supporting his cause.

THE YOUNG MERCHANT

Leader of the Merchant's Alliance, the Human World's largest economic organization. He takes advantage of the changing situation to enact economic reform.

THE BUTLER

One of the Hero's former traveling companions He serves the Lonely Winter King as his butler and gathers information.

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Daughter of Archduke Fire Dragon. As the demonic representative of Gateway City, she is currently working hard to defend the city.

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Former captain of the Holy Key Expeditionary Force. He joined the conference of clans as chief of the Gateway Clan composed of the residents of Gateway City

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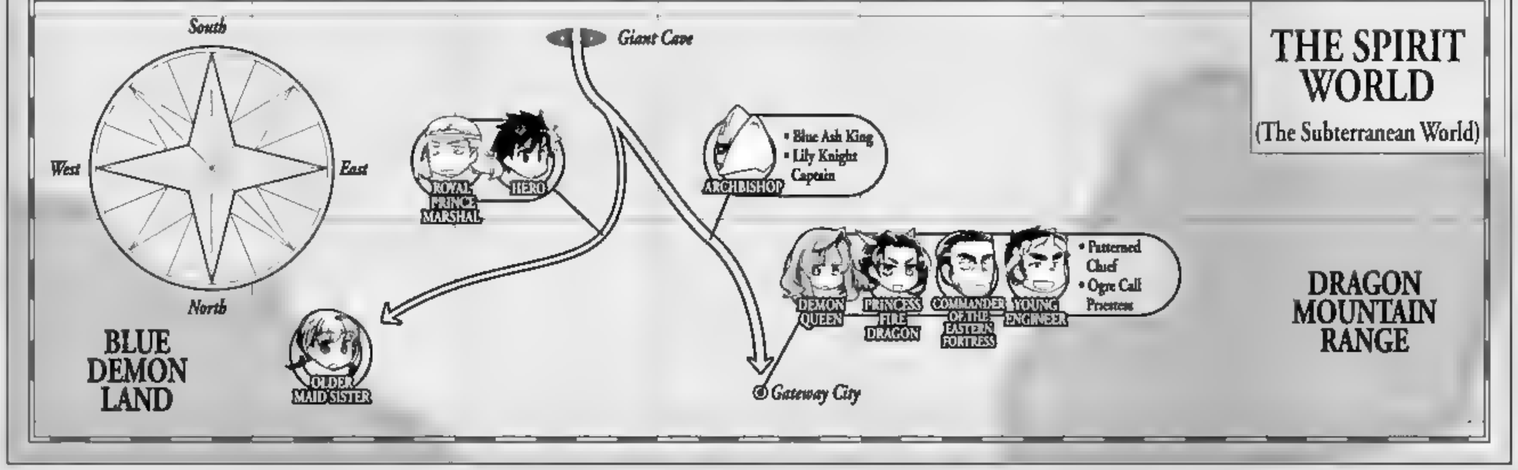

LOCATION OF THE CHARACTERS

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Having received the decision of the Southern Confederation summit conference held in the Iron Kingdom; he returned to the Winter Kingdom and is preparing to dispatch a force.

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Residing in the Alliance Strategic Headquarters located in the Lake Kingdom. He is laying the groundwork for entering the money order business monopolized by the Church of Holy Light.

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Having received the decision of the Southern Confederation summit conference; he prepares to depart for the Spirit World. The Younger Maid Sister's whereabouts are unknown, but she is believed to be training in the culinary arts in the Iron Kingdom.

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The Blue Ash King leads the bulk of the Holy Key Expeditionary Force's attack on Gateway City. The Lily Knight Captain assists the Blue Ash King and serves the Archbishop as he waits in his tent for news of his army's victory.

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The Royal Prince Marshal breaks off from the main force to lead a contingent of 50,000 men to Blue Demon lands. The Hero is accompanying him.

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COMMANDER OF THE EASTERN FORTRESS **YOUNG ENGINEER**

• PATTERNED CHIEF • OGRE CALL PRIESTESS

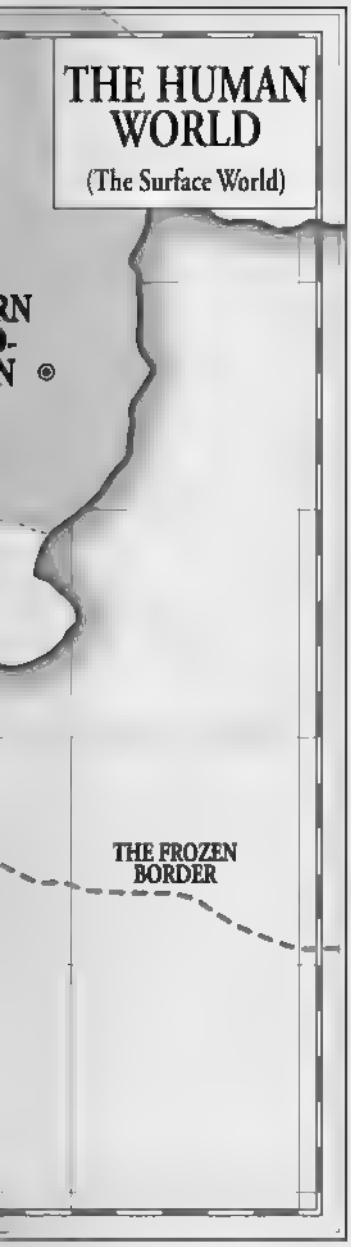
After the battle against the Holy Key Expeditionary Force, the Demon Queen takes command of the army at Gateway City. By her orders, the Commander of the Eastern Fortress is appointed supreme commander of the defense corps tasked with intercepting the enemy, the Ogre Call Priestess is put in charge of internal affairs, and the Young Engineer is tasked with repairing the walls as captain of the wall repair squad. Additionally, the injured Patterned Chief is recuperating. Princess Fire Dragon and the city's self-governing council are assisting the Priestess

OLDER MAID SISTER

After meeting with Archduke Fire Dragon in the Dragon Mountain Range, she leads the mercenary company elsewhere. She beats the Royal Prince Marshal's contingent to Blue Demon lands.

REGARDING GATEWAY CITY

Gateway City is located closest to the Gate that connects the Human and Spirit Worlds. Before, the Gate was not easily traversed by most, but after the Hero destroyed it, it left a massive cavern known as the Giant Cave. Later, at the request of Alliance merchants, the Young Engineer constructed a bridge, making the Human and Spirit Worlds truly adjacent to one another. Now that anyone may travel between the two worlds, Gateway City is more than ever the front door to the Spirit World. The Third Holy Key Expeditionary Force is thought to be attacking Gateway City because of its strategically significant location as a bridgehead for their invasion of the Spirit World. While the Holy Key Expeditionary force is armed with cannons, the demon forces are struggling with their inferior numbers and equipment disadvantages. However, the walls of Gateway City are able to withstand even cannons, and the battle for the city will likely affect the future of the war.



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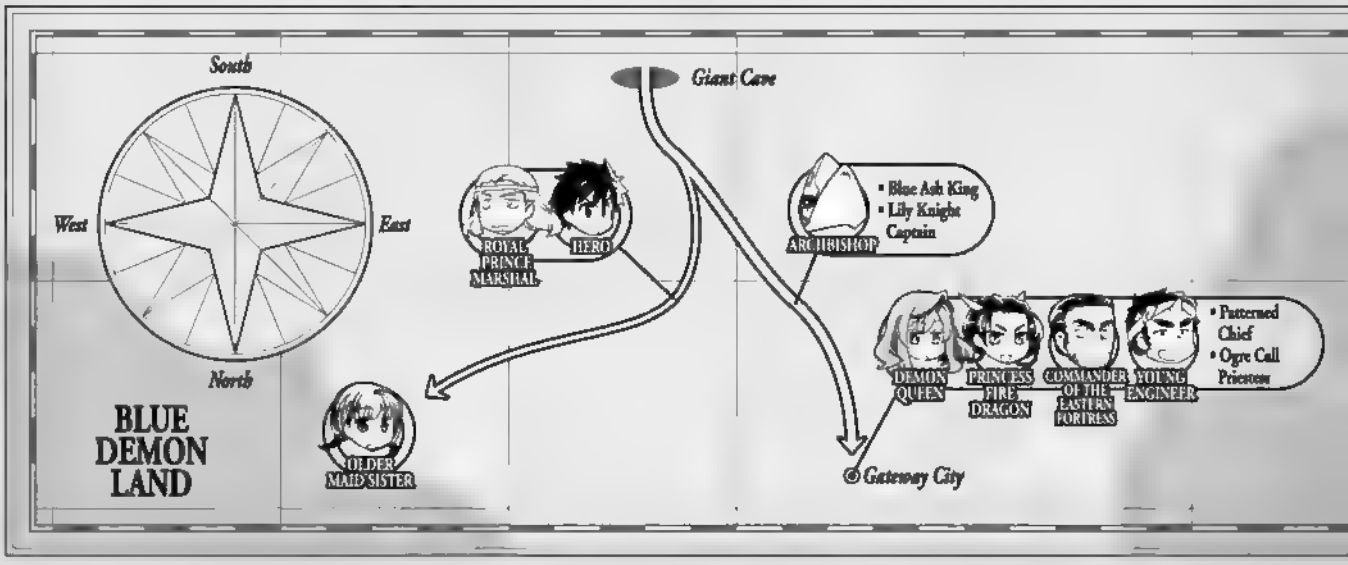
WHITECAP KINGDOM
HOLY KINGDOM
Holy Capital
JADE KINGDOM
LAKE KINGDOM
YOUNG MERCHANT
BRINE KINGDOM
BULL NECK KINGDOM
MOUNTAIN KINGDOM
WHEAT KINGDOM
RED HORSE KINGDOM
COPPER KINGDOM
REED KINGDOM
SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION
MIST KINGDOM
TIN KINGDOM
TREETOP KINGDOM
BLUE MOON OCEAN
ELM KINGDOM
Overwinter Village
YOUNGER MAID SISTER
SOLDIER'S SON
Squill Fields
Iron Capital
MIDNIGHT SUN KINGDOM
Midnight Sun Capital
LONELY WINTER KING
Winter Capital
ICE KINGDOM
IRON KINGDOM
AURORA ISLAND
WINTER KINGDOM
Holy Key Expeditionary Force's Path
North
West
East
South
Giant Cave
ANTARCTIC CONTINENT


South
West
East
North
Giant Cave
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HERO
ARCHBISHOP
• Blue Ash King
• Lily Knight Captain
DEMON QUEEN
PRINCESS FIRE DRAGON
COMMANDER OF THE EASTERN FORTRESS
YOUNG ENGINEER
• Patterned Chief
• Ogre Cult Priestess
BLUE DEMON LAND
OLDER MAID SISTER
Gateway City

SPRINKLE
SPRINKLE
FIRST YOU SPRINKLE SALT ON IT.
OKAY.
"BLAZING HEAT CHARM."
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
THEN YOU PIERCE IT WITH A WOODEN SKEWER...
UH HUH...
DROOL
うま DELICIOUS
OOH
THE TRICK IS TO BROIL IT WITH "BLAZING HEAT" INSTEAD OF USING "FIRE."

F.WOOM!
EXCITED
わくわく
ME TOO!
I'LL COOK ONE TOO!
GRAMPS!
COOK IT FOR ME!
NO.
IF YOU WANT TO EAT, COOK IT YOUR-SELF.
BZZ
I WENT THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE TO CATCH IT...
THIS IS PART OF YOUR TRAINING.
SPEAKING OF TRAINING...
...YOU THINK EVERY-THING'S TRAINING, DON'T YOU?
CRUMBLE
ボロ…

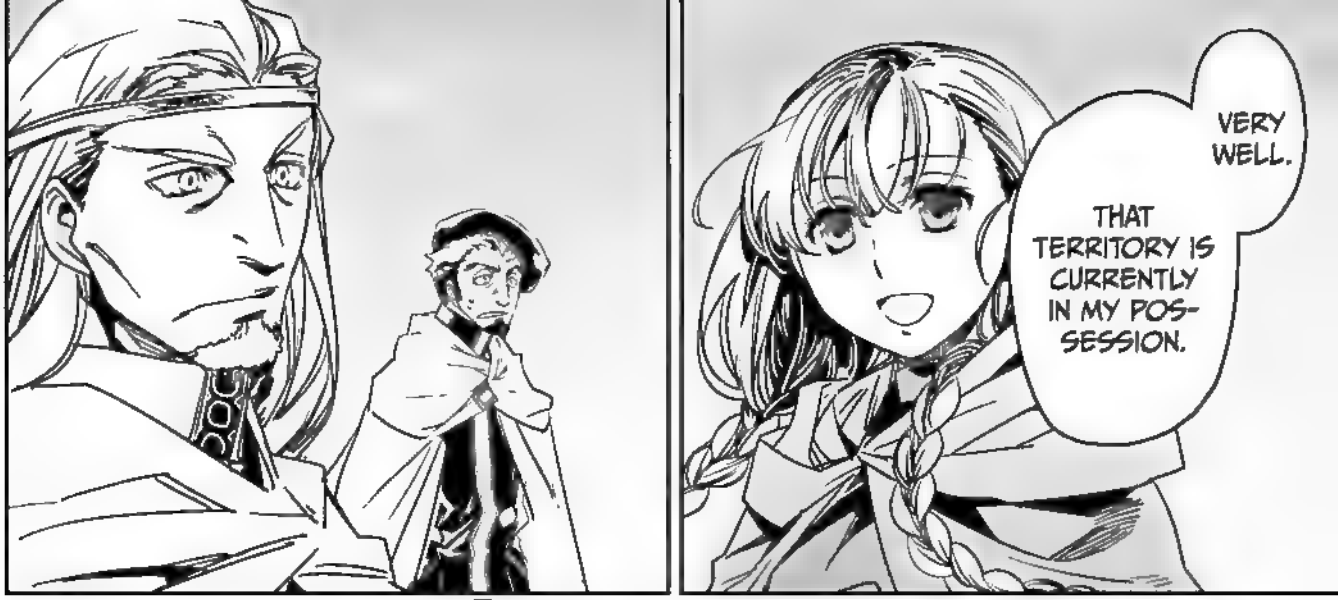
HEY, GRAMPS.
WHY CAN'T I USE ANY SPELLS?
CHARMS ARE HARD SINCE THEY DON'T USE INCANTATIONS.
INCANTATIONS ARE TOO TEDIOUS.
USING INCANTATIONLESS CHARMS...
...IS THE PATH OF WISE MEN AND HEROES.
WE'RE NOT LIKE COMMON FOLK AND ORDINARY MEN!
NOT GUNDAM ZAKUS!
ZAKU?
!!
GROWLLL
GROWL

HMPH.
HERE.
HAVE SOME BREAD AND BACON.
EAT UP, YOU INCOMPETENT HERO.
ALL RIGHT!
YOU'RE A WILD ANIMAL.
CHOMP
CHOMP
WHEW
CITY FOOD SURE IS GOOD!
REALLY?
I'LL BUY SOME MORE, THEN.

A HERO CAN'T LIVE IN CITIES.
WHY NOT?
I WANT TO GO TO THE CITY TOO.
I WANT TO EAT ALL KINDS OF STUFF.
EVEN IF THE WOLF ATE NO SHEEP...
...THE SHEEP WOULD FEAR A WOLF IN THEIR MIDST.
YOU DON'T SEE WOLVES LIVING AMONG SHEEP, DO YOU?
THAT'S TOO COMPLI-CATED FOR ME. I DON'T GET IT.
AND YOU SHOULDN'T.
A WOLF THAT EATS SHEEP CAN PUT THE SHEEP IN THEIR PLACE...
THE FRIGHT-ENED SHEEP WOULD STRIKE AT THE WOLF.
...BUT A WOLF THAT DOESN'T EXPERIENCES GREAT HEART-BREAK...

NOW THEN.
YOU'VE ALREADY LEARNED THE 15 BASIC MAGICS.
WELL, I AM A GENIUS.
THEN LET'S APPLY THEM.
PRACTICE SLOW FLYING USING A "FLYING CHARM" AND "DELAY CHARM."
CAN I GO TO POP AND MOM'S PLACE WHEN WE'RE DONE WITH THIS?
YOU SURE DO LIKE THAT PLACE.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT, GRAMPS?
CHILDREN LOVE THEIR PARENTS.
THAT'S... AN EMPTY CAIRN.
CAN I?
CAN I GO?
YOU MAY.
ALL RIGHT!

FWOOSH
WOPPLE
WOPPLE
FWOOSH
SEE YOU LATER...
...HERO.
SEE YOU LATER, GRAMPS.
I'M OFF.
WOBBLE
...
WOBBLE
WITH WHAT AUTHORITY...
...DO YOU SAY THAT?!
WITHDRAW OUR TROOPS...
...YOU SAY?!


VERY WELL.
THAT TERRITORY IS CURRENTLY IN MY POS-SESSION.

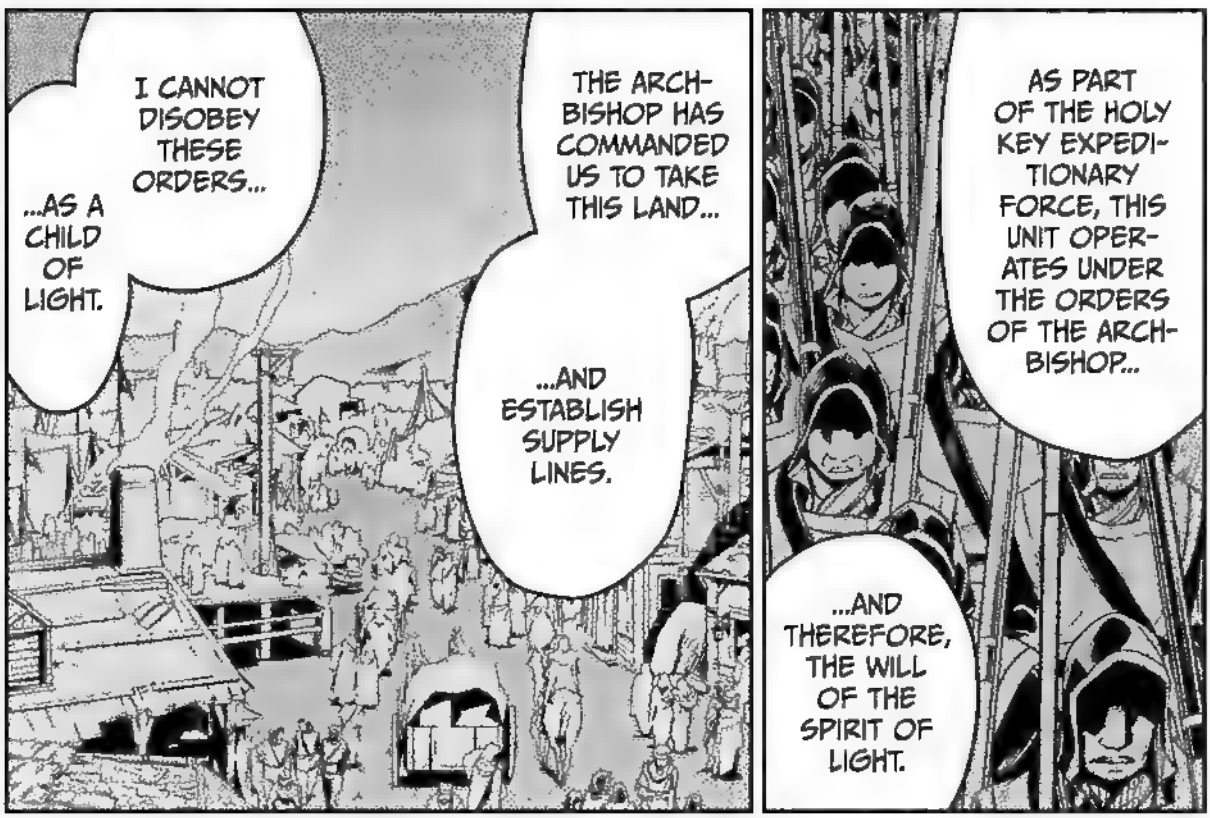
THE MECHANI-CAL DEMONS TASKED WITH LOOKING AFTER THE TERRITORY BY THE DEMON QUEEN...
...AFTER PEACEFUL NEGOTIA-TIONS WITH MY ARMY...
...HAVE AGREED TO COMPLETELY HAND OVER CONTROL TO MY FORCES.
THIS IS A COPY OF THAT DOCUMENT.

AS THE CURRENT LORD OF THIS TERRITORY, I HAVE A REQUEST FOR YOUR ARMY.
CURRENTLY YOUR FORCES HAVE ALREADY ENTERED THE FORMER BLUE DEMON TERRITORY.
IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO ATTACK, I ASK THAT YOU TURN BACK IMMEDIATELY...
...AND LEAVE THIS PLACE.

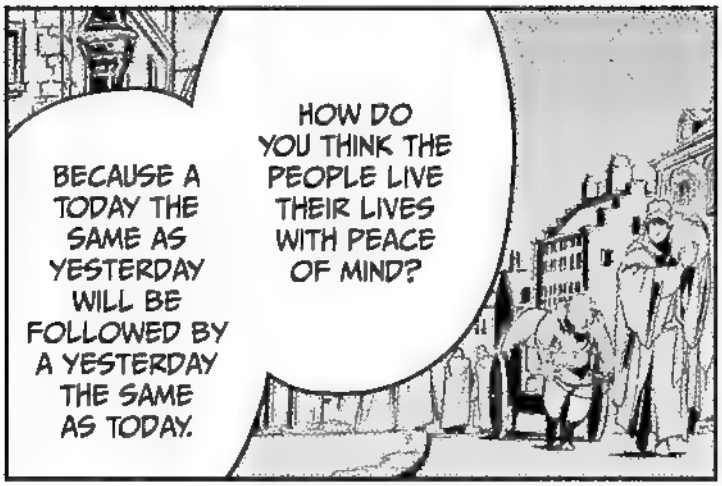
MY ARMY IS COMPRISED ENTIRELY OF HUMAN SOLDIERS.
CURRENTLY THE BLUE DEMON LAND IS A HUMAN TERRITORY RULED BY HUMANS.
IF WE DON'T PLAN TO ATTACK?!
WE ARE...
DON'T BE AB-SURD!
....
WILL YOU INVADE A REGION RULED BY HUMANS?
EVEN BY THE LARGEST ESTIMATE, THEY MUST HAVE BETWEEN 10 AND 20,000.
WE COULD WIPE THEM OUT AT ONCE, BUT...
IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A LARGE-SCALE ARMY ENTERED THE SPIRIT WORLD...

I HAD NO IDEA, BUT THAT DOESN'T EXCUSE WHAT I'VE DONE.
WE WERE NOT YET INFORMED. THIS IS JUST A MISUNDER-STANDING.
I APOLO-GIZE.

....
HOWEVER, WE CANNOT WITHDRAW OUR TROOPS, EITHER.


I CANNOT DISOBEY THESE ORDERS...
...AS A CHILD OF LIGHT.
THE ARCH-BISHOP HAS COMMANDED US TO TAKE THIS LAND...
...AND ESTABLISH SUPPLY LINES.
AS PART OF THE HOLY KEY EXPEDI-TIONARY FORCE, THIS UNIT OPER-ATES UNDER THE ORDERS OF THE ARCH-BISHOP...
...AND THEREFORE, THE WILL OF THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT.

THE LAKESIDE CONVENT WOULD GLADLY WELCOME YOU, ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL, AND THE HOLY KINGDOM...
...WITH OPEN ARMS.
WHY NOT JOIN THE LAKESIDE CONVENT?
I AM A CHILD OF LIGHT AS WELL.
HOHO
CHUCKLE
...THE HOLY KINGDOM HAS A DUTY TO MAINTAIN ORDER.
I APPRECIATE THE OFFER, BUT I CANNOT ACCEPT.
AS BIG BROTHER TO THE NATIONS OF THE CONTINENT...
AND WHAT IS ORDER?


HOW DO YOU THINK THE PEOPLE LIVE THEIR LIVES WITH PEACE OF MIND?
BECAUSE A TODAY THE SAME AS YESTERDAY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A YESTERDAY THE SAME AS TODAY.

PEACE OF MIND.

IF THEY THOUGHT THEY MIGHT DIE WHILE THEY SLEPT...
...THEY WOULD BE TOO AFRAID TO SLEEP.
HOW DO THEY SLEEP AT NIGHT?
BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY WILL WAKE WHEN MORNING COMES.

AS GUARD-IANS OF ORDER...
...TO BRING PEACE TO OUR PEOPLE ...
...THE HOLY KINGDOM MUST PROTECT A TODAY THE SAME AS YES-TERDAY AND TOMORROW THE SAME AS TODAY.

BUT...
...FROM EXPERIENCE, WE KNOW WE WAKE UP WHEN MORNING COMES.
THAT IS REPEATED, AND THAT IS ORDER.

SO I HAVE A SUGGES-TION.
WE MUST ESTABLISH SUPPLY LINES.
HOW-EVER...
...WE DO NOT WISH TO FIGHT.
SO YOUR ANSWER IS...?
I WILL PAY YOU.
HOW DOES 30 GOLD COINS OF THE NEW KINGDOM'S CURRENCY SOUND?
I ASK THAT YOU DELIVER...
...FOUR THOUSAND CARTS OF FOOD AND A THOUSAND CARTS OF SALTPETER.
A SAD SITUA-TION FOR BOTH OUR ARMIES.
WE WILL HAVE TO ESTABLISH SUPPLY LINES BY FORCE.
AND IF WE REFUSE?
DON'T BE RIDICU-LOUS!
YOU COULDN'T ARM A SINGLE MAN WITH THAT TRIFLING AMOUNT!

TSK!
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WANT A FIGHT.
I'D LIKE TO ASK THE SAME THING.
DO YOU WANT A FIGHT...
...ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL?
A FIGHT BETWEEN TWO HUMAN ARMIES?

HERO!
MURMUR
HERO!
YOU KNOW THIS GIRL?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

I'M NOT SURE HOW TO DESCRIBE IT.
YOU LOOK... RESOLUTE, I GUESS.
I'M NOT SURE I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN...

DO I LOOK THAT GRIM?
YOU'VE CHANGED SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.
YOU HAVE THE FACE OF A FIGHTER.

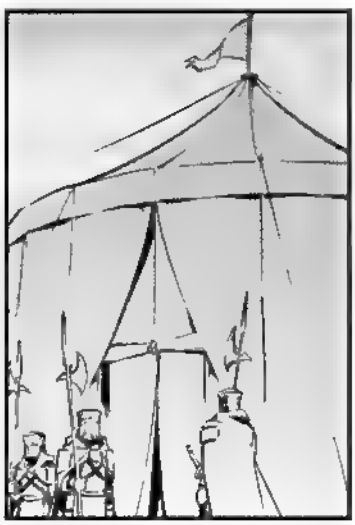
I WON'T LET IT BE THAT WAY FOREVER.
HERO... HAVE YOU... SHED LOTS OF BLOOD?
I GUESS. ALL I CAN DO IS FIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT'S FINE. I WILL HAVE MY WAY BY FORCE.
BOTH MY MISTRESS AND YOU HAVE DONE THE SAME.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH BY MAKING THEM RETREAT?
IT'S A SE-CRET.
WHAT?
I CAN'T TELL YOU YET.
BOOM
BOOM
POW
POW

WE WERE SUPPOSED TO ATTACK...
...THE SUPPLY LINES OF THE SPRAWLING EXPEDITIONARY FORCE!
BUT THEY'VE GOT ALL THESE MEN HERE!
DAMN IT!
KAPING
KAPING
WHOOSH
WITH ONLY THE REMNANTS OF THE FANGED DEMONS, WE CAN'T ...
?!
AAAAAHHH
BOOM
SPLURCH

FROM WHERE?
WHOSE ARMY?

BOOM
ARE THESE ...
...REIN-FORCE-MENTS?
BOOM

NEWS FROM THE MAIN FORCE?
YES.
THE SIEGE IS BEHIND SCHED-ULE.



...BUT RATHER A COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT BY GATEWAY CITY'S DEMON ARMY...
...THAT HAS WITHSTOOD A WEEK OF CANNON BARRAGE.
BUT...
...THIS IS NOT SO MUCH A FAILURE OF THE BLUE ASH KING...
THEY'RE STRUG-GLING?
ALREADY A WEEK HAS PASSED SINCE THE DEMON ARMY RETREATED TO WITHIN GATEWAY CITY.
WE'RE STARTING TO RUN OUT OF GUNPOWDER AND FOOD.
...HAS ALLOWED THEM TO WITHSTAND A WEEK...
...OF CONTINUOUS FIRE FROM THOSE CANNONS?
BUT WHAT KIND OF WALLS AND COMMAND...
SINCE I HAVEN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE.
WE WILL MAKE THE HERO TELL US...
...THE TRUE IDENTITY OF THE YOUNG LADY SCHOLAR.
AT THIS RATE, WE WILL MAKE NO PROG-RESS.
WE HAVE NO CHOICE. SUMMON THE HERO.
YES, SIR!
SLOWING US DOWN IN THIS MANNER...
...MUST BE ANOTHER ONE OF THAT SCHOLAR'S GOALS...

WHO IS THAT GIRL?
HMM.
THE HOLY KINGDOM AND CHURCH CALL THE WOMAN THE "CRIMSON SCHOLAR."
SHE'S ONE OF HERS.
THAT GIRL ...
...IS THE CRIMSON SCHOLAR?
STANDARD-BEARER OF THE SOUTH'S AGRICULTURAL REFORM.
A GENIUS IN ALL FIELDS.
LIGHT OF THE SOUTH. SHE'S THE CRIMSON SCHOLAR ALSO KNOWN BY THESE NAMES?
ABOUT WHAT?
ABOUT THIS WAR.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, HERO?
I SEE.
NO WONDER...
I'M NOT LYING

I'VE ONLY EVER WANTED ONE THING.
TO PROTECT THIS WORLD.
TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK, HERO.
THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION MEANS TO GO TO WAR AGAINST THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.
WHOSE SIDE WILL YOU BE ON?
THEN...
...HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A CONFLICT BETWEEN HUMAN ARMIES?
HUMANITY'S WORLD?
SHOULD WE REALLY BE JUDGING WHO'S RIGHT AND WHO'S WRONG IN THESE PETTY QUARRELS BETWEEN HUMANS...
...IN THE NAME OF THE HERO AND SPIRIT?
...IS INHABITED BY BOTH HUMANS AND DEMONS.
THIS ONE WORLD THAT CAN BE CROSSED ON FOOT...
DON'T BE SO SMALL-MINDED.
BY WORLD, I MEAN THIS WORLD.

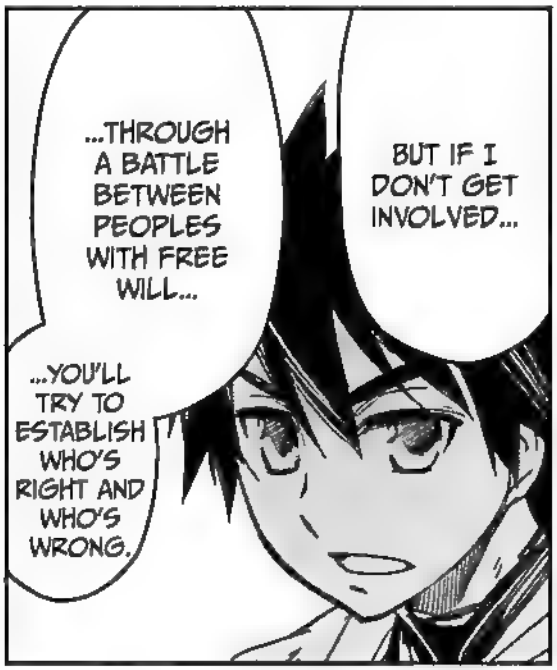
YES.
IS THAT RIGHT?
...ARE EQUALLY DETEST-ABLE IN YOUR EYES?
...AND THE WAR BETWEEN DEMONS AND THE HOLY KEY EXPEDITION-ARY FORCE ...
...I CAN ASSUME THE BATTLE BETWEEN US AND THE CRIMSON SCHOLAR THAT'S UNFOLDING BEFORE YOU...
THEN...

NO MATTER WHAT.
NO MATTER WHAT?

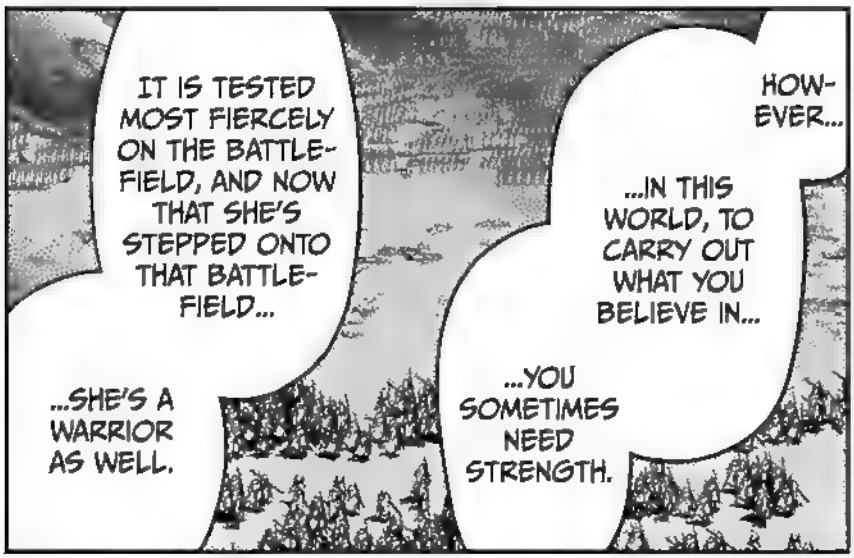
NO.
ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL, DO YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF STOPPING THIS?

WHAT DID EMANCIPATING THE SERFS BRING TO THIS WORLD?
ULTIMATELY, IT'S BROUGHT NOTHING BUT CHAOS.
WE FIGHT FOR THE ORDER AND PEACE OF OUR PEOPLE.
THE CENTRAL CONTI-NENT...
...HAS A LONG HISTORY OF STABIL-ITY AND GROWTH.
THAT HISTORY OF GROWTH MATCHES THE PATH OF THE HOLY KINGDOM.
BECAUSE WE BELIEVE OUR WAY IS RIGHT...
...WE HOLD FAST TO OUR PRIN-CIPLES.

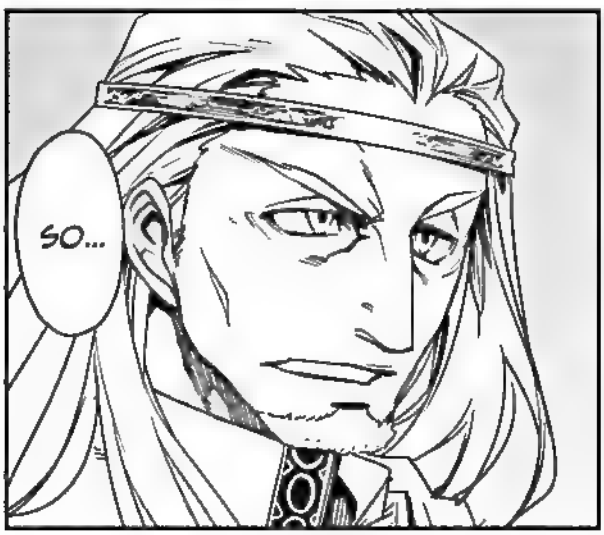
....
HERO.
THIS IS A CLASH BETWEEN PEOPLES WITH FREE WILL...
...TRYING TO SEE THEIR PRINCIPLES THROUGH.
I ASK THAT YOU NOT INTER-FERE.


BUT IF I DON'T GET INVOLVED...
...THROUGH A BATTLE BETWEEN PEOPLES WITH FREE WILL...
...YOU'LL TRY TO ESTABLISH WHO'S RIGHT AND WHO'S WRONG.

BECAUSE BOTH SIDES ARE HUMAN AND BOTH SIDES ARE EQUAL...
...YOU ASK THAT I, THE HERO, NOT GET INVOLVED.
IN-DEED.
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY, RIGHT?


IT IS TESTED MOST FIERCELY ON THE BATTLE-FIELD, AND NOW THAT SHE'S STEPPED ONTO THAT BATTLE-FIELD...
...SHE'S A WARRIOR AS WELL.
HOW-EVER...
...IN THIS WORLD, TO CARRY OUT WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN...
...YOU SOMETIMES NEED STRENGTH.

I DON'T CLAIM TO BE AB-SOLUTELY GOOD OR JUST.

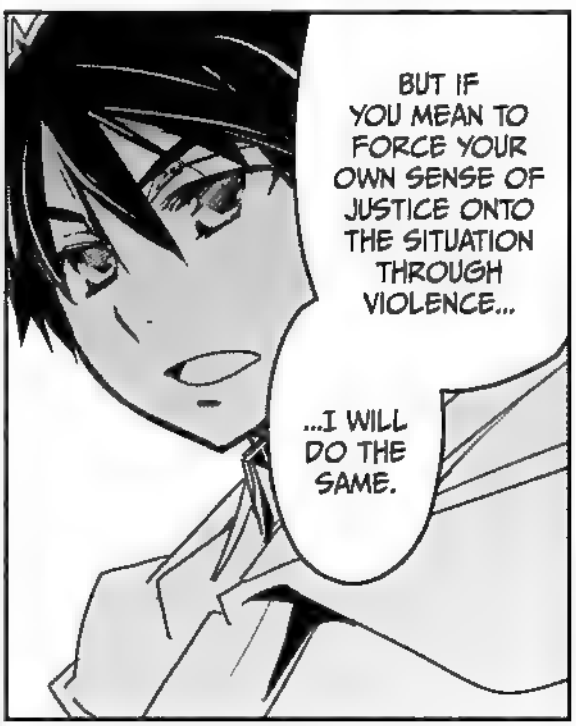

SO...

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.

...AND ELIMINATE THEM BY FORCE.
...IN OTHER WORDS, THE ATTACKING ARMY...
...THE HERO WILL STRIKE AT THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO DISPLAY THEIR STRENGTH ON THE BATTLE-FIELD...
...IN ORDER TO DEFEND HIS OWN FREE WILL AND PRIN-CIPLES...
SO BY THAT SAME LOGIC...

IF YOU INTEND TO TALK, I'LL GO WITH YOU.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE CHURCH HAS ALREADY PICKED A FIGHT WITH ME.
...HAS ALREADY CHOSEN TO ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE.
THE REMAINING HALF OF THE HOLY KEY EXPE-DITIONARY FORCE...


...I WILL DO THE SAME.
BUT IF YOU MEAN TO FORCE YOUR OWN SENSE OF JUSTICE ONTO THE SITUATION THROUGH VIOLENCE...

...THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DESCRIBE THAT EXCEPT BEYOND ARROGANT.
...IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF ARMIES OR HISTORY ALONE...
NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOU ARE...
WE HAVE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MUSKETS.
THEN I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY AS WELL.

I'M NOT THAT ARROGANT.
OF COURSE.
I AM CONFIDENT WE WILL.
WE WILL SUFFER LOSSES, BUT WE WILL WIN.

...I NEVER WOULD HAVE HELD BACK.
IF I WANTED TO RESOLVE THINGS WITH VIOLENCE...
DO YOU UNDERSTAND...
...HOW MUCH A MAN WHO CAN DO ONLY THAT HAS CURSED THE POINTLESSNESS OF HIS ABILITIES?
...I'M THE HERO WHO CAN ONLY DESTROY THINGS WITH VIOLENCE.
BUT, ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL ...

...YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHAT'S "BEYOND THE HILL."
LIKE HER...
YOU HAVE THE POWER TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD BEING SHED.
ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL.
THE CONTINENT'S GREATEST HERO.

WILL YOU WITH-DRAW?
YES.

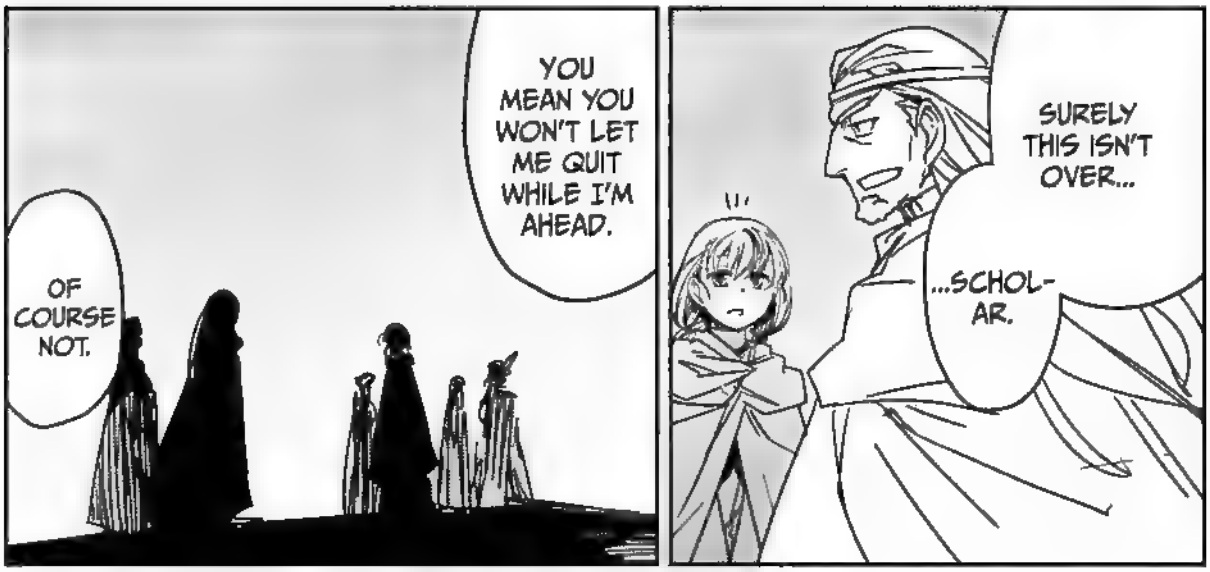
SCHOL-AR.
I CONCEDE THIS MATCH TO YOU.

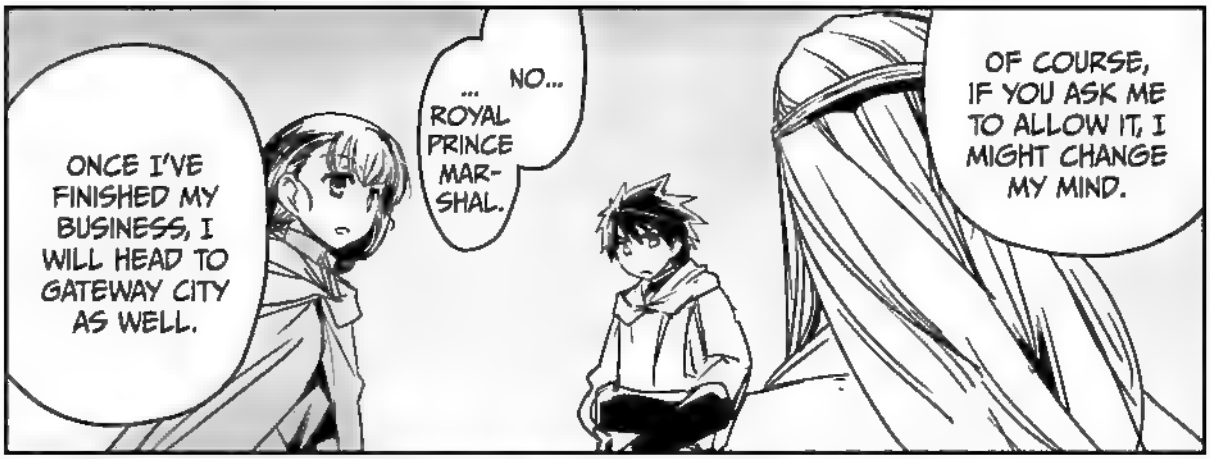
THE GIRL DID IT!
CHEER
わあっ

YOU WIN THIS ROUND.
IT SEEMS OUR REAR IS IN QUITE AN UPROAR.
WE NO LONGER HAVE TIME FOR NEGO-TIATIONS.

YES.
I KNEW THAT FROM THE BE-GINNING.
THIS WASN'T ACCOM-PLISHED THROUGH YOUR POWER ALONE.
YOU SHOULD THANK THE HERO.

OF COURSE.
I SWEAR ON THE HONOR OF MY MASTER.
BUT...
...THE MEDICINE AND 850 CARTS OF FOOD YOU PROMISED ...


YOU MEAN YOU WON'T LET ME QUIT WHILE I'M AHEAD.
OF COURSE NOT.
SURELY THIS ISN'T OVER...
...SCHOL-AR.


OF COURSE, IF YOU ASK ME TO ALLOW IT, I MIGHT CHANGE MY MIND.
... NO... ROYAL PRINCE MAR-SHAL.
ONCE I'VE FINISHED MY BUSINESS, I WILL HEAD TO GATEWAY CITY AS WELL.

NO.
THEN I WILL HAVE TO WELCOME YOU.
YOU AND THE HERO SHOULD COME AT THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WITH WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT.

?!
I WON'T ALLOW THE HERO TO INTER-FERE.

NEXT TIME, ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL ...
...YOU AND I SHALL FIGHT.

I CALLED MYSELF A TRAVELING SCHOLAR.
THE TITLE OF "THE CRIMSON SCHOLAR" IS NOT MINE TO USE AFTER ALL.
ALSO, I MUST CORRECT MYSELF ...
...ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL.
COR-RECT WHAT?
...?
...I WILL TELL YOU MY OWN NAME.
SO BEFORE YOU, THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL, THE MEN OF THE HOLY KINGDOM...
...THE HERO, AND MY COMPANIONS...
I WAS BORN IN THE WINTER KINGDOM...
...A POOR AND MISERABLE SERF.
IM-POS-SIBLE!
SHE'S A SERF?!
MURMUR
AND ALSO...
...A POWER-LESS GIRL WHO WISHES ONLY TO BE SIMPLY HUMAN.

HOW-EVER...
...TODAY ...
...FROM THIS POINT ON, I WILL CALL MYSELF THIS.
I AM NOW A HERO TOO.
ONE OF MANY PEOPLE WHO BEGAN WALKING THAT NARROW PATH...
...WHO HAS DECIDED TO SAVE THIS WORLD.

THE END

Chapter 47
From This Point On, I Will Call Myself This

RESUPPLYING DURING WAR

Wars consume a vast amount of resources. In order to keep fighting, supply lines must be secured to bring the necessary supplies to the front lines.

...AS A CHILD OF LIGHT.
I CANNOT DISOBEY THESE ORDERS...
THE ARCH-BISHOP HAS COMMANDED US TO TAKE THIS LAND...
...AND ESTABLISH SUPPLY LINES.

The Royal Prince Marshal thought to capture the Blue Demon territory as a supply base and establish supply lines to Gateway City.

THE SCALE OF WAR EXPANDED BY THE ENHANCEMENT OF RESUPPLY METHODS

A variety of resources are consumed during a war. For soldiers to keep fighting, they need food, and weapons damaged or destroyed on the battlefield must be replaced. Medicine is needed to treat injured soldiers, and food for the warhorses or fuel for the vehicles used to transport them is essential as well. Once supplies run out, anxiety spreads, and the soldiers' morale falls. Securing supplies is a problem that has constantly plagued war.

In Europe, excluding the Roman Empire that established some degree of framework for resupplying, until the 16th Century, there was no system in place to deliver supplies. In most cases, all the supplies an army had was whatever it was carrying at the time it set out, and the rest was acquired either on the move or locally procured at the battlefield -- in other words, either purchased from nearby cities and towns or plundered. When long battles such as sieges were anticipated, goods were sometimes transported by boat to storehouses built on rivers, but wars were often ended on account of a lack of supplies.

The importance of resupplying was widely recognized some time between the 17th to 18th Centuries when firearms became the principal weapon on the battlefield. Food could be acquired from nearby cities, but gunpowder for guns and cannons was not so easily acquired. A major reason France's Napoleon was able to sweep across Europe was because he structured his method of resupplying to carry out his strategies. However, at the time, the primary methods for transporting goods were manpower and carts, and there was a limit to what could be transported to locations far from rivers, so his forces procured supplies locally as well.

The situation largely improved with the appearance of steam engines and the military use of railroads and developments in communications technology. Supplies could be transported at speeds and across distances that were previously inconceivable, but at the same time, this also expanded the scale of war.

Under these circumstances, no matter how many enemies one defeats on the front lines, the soldiers and supplies are replenished. Establishing and breaking supply lines became key, but both involve stationing forces to block the enemy, meaning battle lines grew larger and larger.

Ultimately, wars escalated to all out war between nations. Barring a significant difference between the strength of both sides, war became a costly and ineffective means of diplomacy.

Due to changes in the situation such as the Older Maid Sister's plan and the Hero's appearance, the Royal Prince Marshal was only able to acquire far fewer supplies than he originally planned.

LONG AGO

IS IT A TRAP OR SOME KIND OF PLAN?
PROBABLY NOT.
THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL HAS LEFT THE MAIN FORCE?
IS IT TRUE?
YES.
FORMU-LATING PLANS...
...IS GENER-ALLY SOME-THING THE WEAK DO.
BRING A LARGER FORCE THAN HIS ENEMY'S, ESTABLISH SUPPLY LINES, AND WIN WARS HE'S MEANT TO WIN.
AS FAR AS I KNOW, THAT'S THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL'S PERSONALITY.
HE HASN'T CHANGED.
IF THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL HAS LEFT THE MAIN FORCE...
...THERE MUST BE SOME DISCORD WITHIN THE ARMY.
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT HIM.
HAVE YOU MET HIM BEFORE?
IT WAS SO LONG AGO, I CAN HARDLY REMEMBER.

HE HAS THE COUNTENANCE OF A HERO.
IN-DEED.
WELL, WELL.
HE LOOKS SO CLEVER!
I'VE HEARD HE'S ALREADY MASTERED ALL 24 MAGIC CHARMS AT HIS AGE.
THE HERO IS A SYMBOL OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY.
HE IS THE GUARDIAN OF OUR WORLD.
ON TOP OF THAT, HIS SKILL WITH A SWORD...
...IS SAID TO BE AMONG THE GREATEST NATIONS' KNIGHT CAPTAINS.
MAOYU
Archenemy and Hero
CHAPTER 48

SH...
SHUT UP!
STOP ACTING SO MOON-STRUCK.
IT'S CREEPY.
HEE HEE.
YOUR BLACK HAIR IS SO CUTE...
...LITTLE HERO.
HE'S STILL PRACTI-CALLY A BABY.
UNTIL HE UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT MEANS TO SAVE SOME-ONE, HE'LL BE GREEN FOREVER.
HMPH
STRENGTH ISN'T DETERMINED BY ONE'S SKILLS ALONE.
THIS HERO IS STILL ONLY AN APPRENTICE.
WE EVEN HAVE THE BLADE THE LEGENDARY HERO ONCE WIELDED.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO VISIT THE ARMORY?
OUR TERRITORY HAS QUITE A HISTORY.
HERO.
YES?

Chapter 48 Archenemy and Hero, For Tomorrow!

HOW IS HIS CHARACTER?
A HERO TO THE CORE.
HE'S AMONG THE MOST EXCEPTIONAL WE'VE EVER SEEN.
I'M SURE HE'LL GROW INTO A JUST YOUNG MAN.
HOWEVER...
...IT WILL TAKE TIME.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME.
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD, WISE MAN?
THE CHURCH'S MAGES AND PROMINENT FORTUNE-TELLERS...
...HAVE ALL PREDICTED THE SAME THING.
A NEW DEMON MONARCH HAS APPEARED.
WE MUST SEND THE HERO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

UH...
HELLO?
THAT MUST BE HIM.
HUH?
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHOA
WOW
HUH.
THAT'S RIGHT. I'M THE LORD'S HEIR. I'M IMPORTANT.
THAT'S ME. DO YOU LIVE HERE?
YOU'RE THE HERO?
ARE YOU THE HERO?
?
FACE THE OTHER WAY.
IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'RE INVINCIBLE?
UM... I'M STRONG.
YEAH.
IS IT TRUE?

CLANG
?
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
WOW!
IT'S TRUE!
THE BLADE IS CHIPPED!
IT'S A REAL SWORD, BUT HE DOESN'T EVEN BLEED!
HA HA HA HA
RE-ALLY?
HA HA HA HA
LET ME TRY
CLANG
CLANG
HEY!
STOP!
CLANG
WHACK
CLANG
WHO CARES? YOU'RE NOT INJURED.
WELL, IT STILL HURTS!

YEAH, A CONVENIENT SOLDIER WE DON'T HAVE TO PAY.
MY FATHER TOLD ME
NO!
I'M THE HERO!
STOP THAT!
YOU'RE ONLY A COMMON SOLDIER, AND YOU DARE TO DEFY ME?
I'M A NOBLE.
CHUCKLE
CLEAN THIS PLACE UP.
SNICKER
CLANG
SO YOU'RE A COUNTRY BOY..
...AM NOT!
IS THAT SO?
THE CLOTHES YOU'RE WEARING ARE PRACTICALLY RAGS TOO.
LOOK AT THE WEAKLING. HE CAN'T EVEN TALK BACK.
HE'S NO FUN.
THE HERO IS NO MORE THAN A COUNTRY BUMPKIN.

PFFFT WHAT-EVER
DON'T BOTHER WITH IDIOTS.
THAT'S WHAT THE OLD MAN SAID.
...I SHOULD LEAVE.
TRAINING IN THE FOREST IS MORE FUN.
THE CHILDREN OF NOBLES SEEM LOUD AND ARROGANT.
YES.
I SAW HIM EARLIER.
WHAT DID YOU THINK ...
...OF THE HERO?
HEY!
IT'S THE PRETTY LADY FROM EARLIER.
HE DISGUSTED ME.
HIS GAZE ALONE MADE ME SHUDDER.
A MONSTER THAT COULD FREEZE OR INCINERATE US IN AN INSTANT IS IN THE SAME ROOM AS US.
WITH A SINGLE FINGER, HE COULD DO AS HE PLEASES TO OUR LIVES AND DIGNITY.
HE MAY LOOK YOUNG, BUT HE'S A MONSTER.

YOU WORRY TOO MUCH.
HA HA HA
HE'S NO MORE THAN A POWERFUL WEAPON TO BE USED BY THE KING.
BUT I UNDER-STAND HOW YOU FEEL.
HE SMILES AND SPEAKS LIKE A HUMAN...
I CAN'T HANDLE IT.
JUST BEING IN THE SAME ROOM AS HIM MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M LOSING MY MIND.
WHAT-EVER.
WHO CARES ?
WHO CARES ABOUT ORDINARY PEOPLE...
OH?
HEY!
GRAMPS !
DASH
YOU'RE FINISHED TALKING?
SHALL WE GO?
HMPH.
ALL RIGHT.
I'M EX-HAUST-ED.
GOOD GRIEF
ME TOO.
I LIKE THE FOREST BETTER.

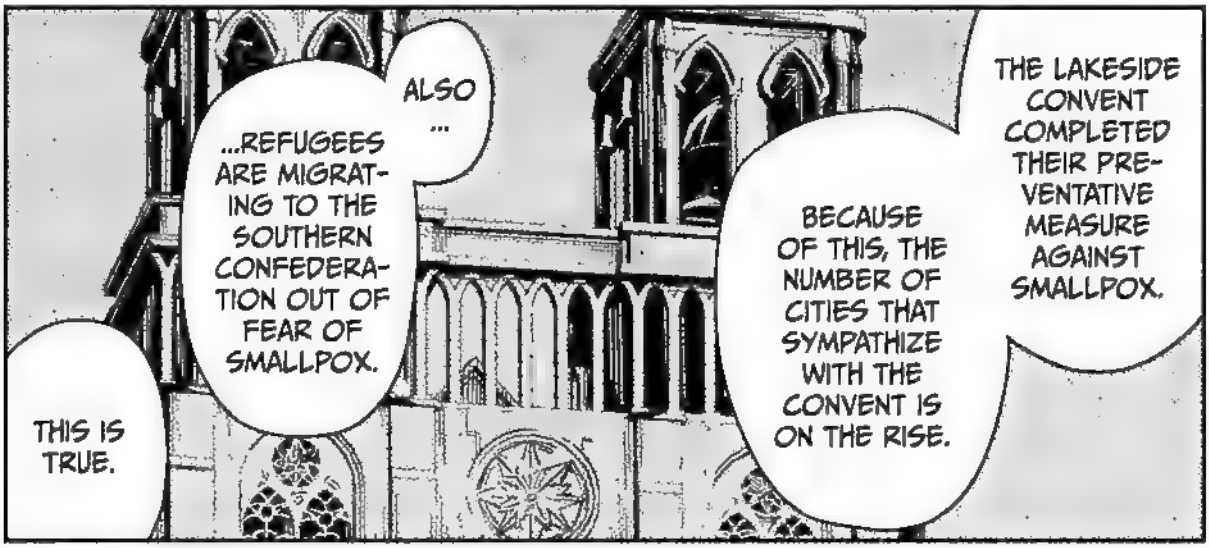
HEY, GRAMPS.
....
I SHOULDN'T... GET MY HOPES UP.
YOU'VE GROWN MUCH TO HAVE REALIZED THAT...
...HERO.

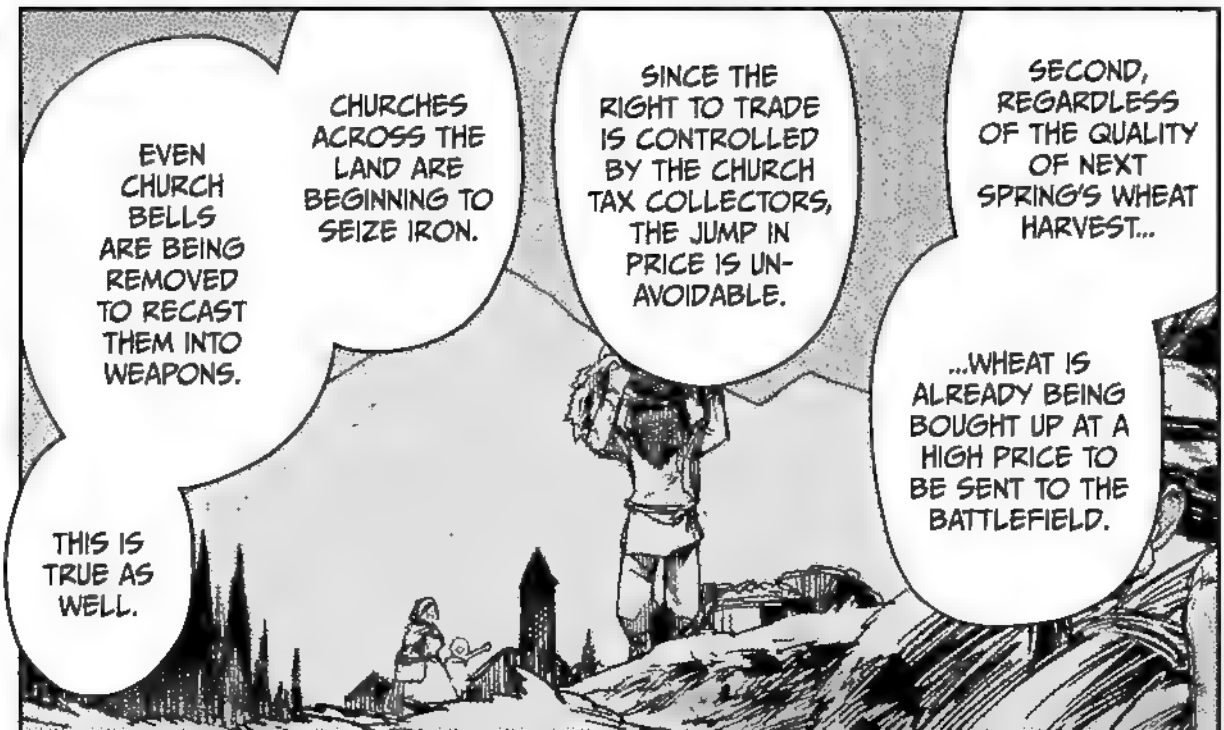
LAKE KINGDOM CAPITAL
ALLIANCE STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS

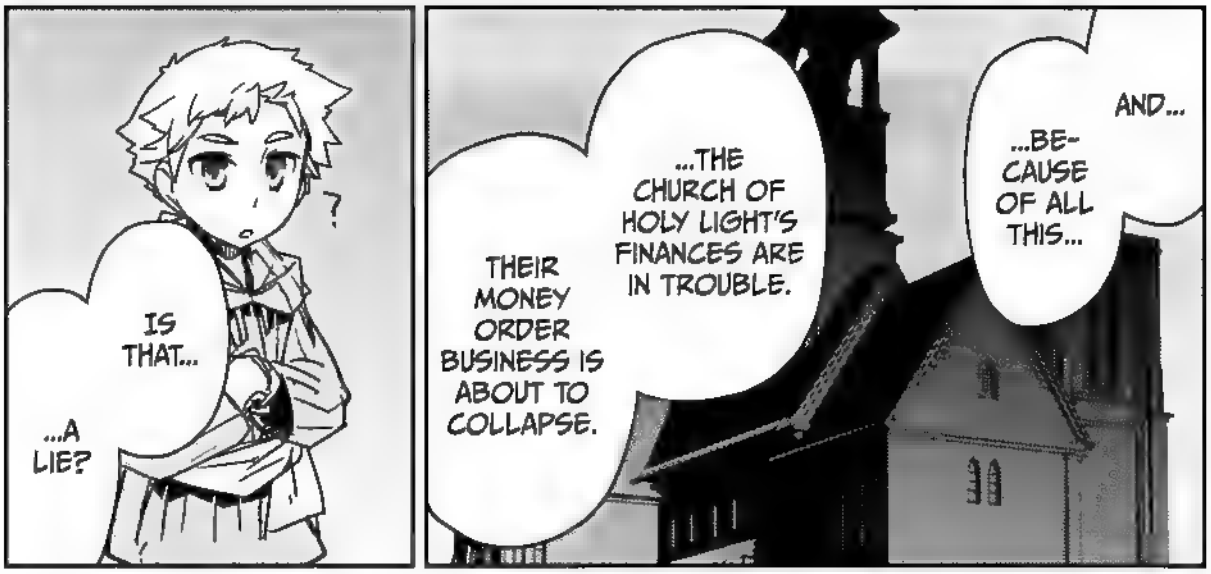
A POST-HORSE
BUY...
EEK
PEEK

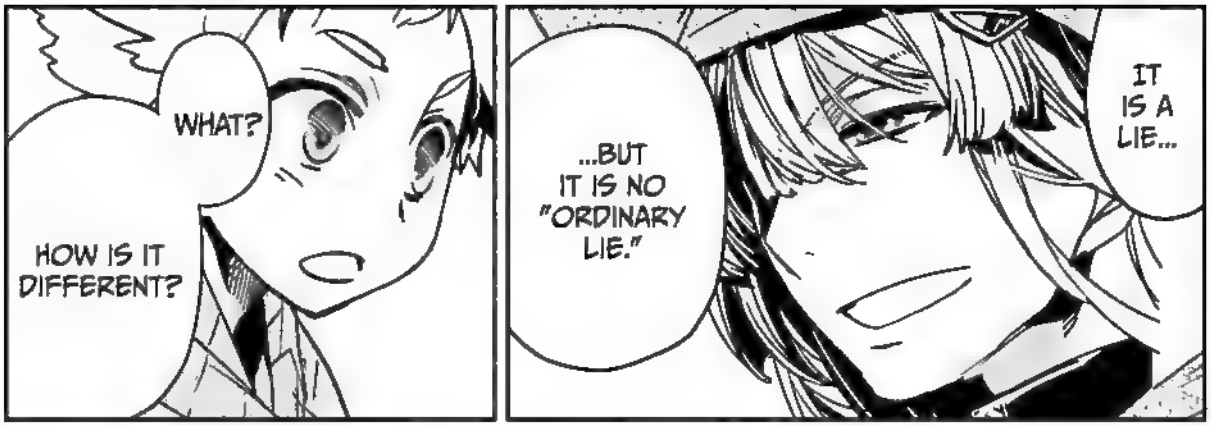
YES. I'M HERE ON AN ERRAND FOR THE TREASURER.
AH, I SEE.
GOOD WORK.
BOW
OH.
YOU'RE THE MERCHANT'S SON'S...
EXCUSE ME...
...FOR SOMETHING RELATED TO THIS THING YOU JUST BROUGHT US.
YOU MEAN... MONEY ORDERS?
YOU SEEM BUSY.
YES.
WE'RE PREPARING...
WOW

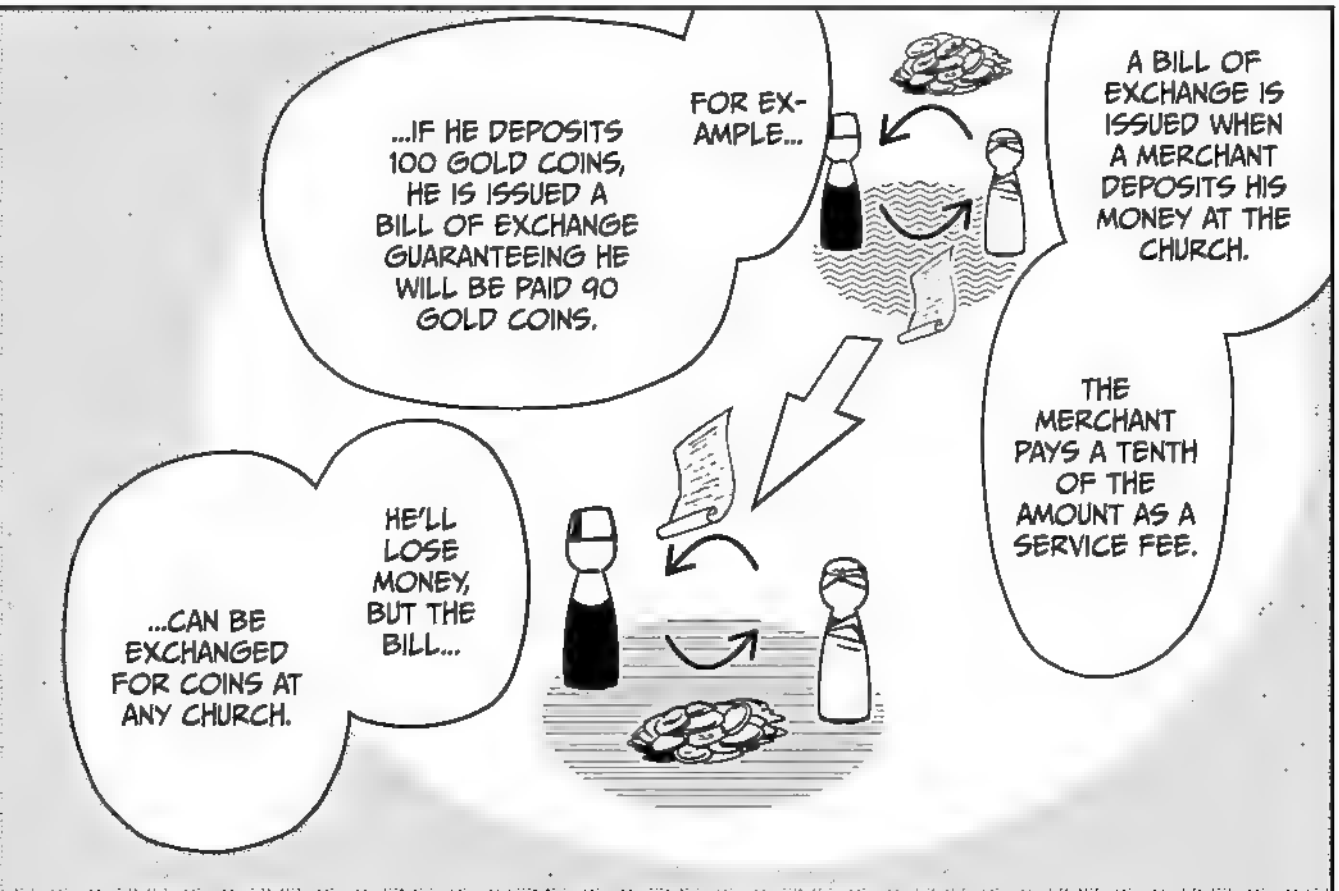
"PEOPLE BELIEVE RUMORS...
"...BECAUSE THEY WANT SOMETHING TO BE TRUE...
"...OR NOT TRUE."
"MIX A SINGLE LIE IN WITH TWO TRUTHS.
"THE SUCKERS WILL SWALLOW THE ENTIRE STORY WHOLE."
IT'S A SAYING WE HAVE IN THE ALLIANCE.
WILL IT WORK?


THE LAKESIDE CONVENT COMPLETED THEIR PRE-VENTATIVE MEASURE AGAINST SMALLPOX.
BECAUSE OF THIS, THE NUMBER OF CITIES THAT SYMPATHIZE WITH THE CONVENT IS ON THE RISE.
ALSO ...
...REFUGEES ARE MIGRAT-ING TO THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERA-TION OUT OF FEAR OF SMALLPOX.
THIS IS TRUE.


SECOND, REGARDLESS OF THE QUALITY OF NEXT SPRING'S WHEAT HARVEST...
SINCE THE RIGHT TO TRADE IS CONTROLLED BY THE CHURCH TAX COLLECTORS, THE JUMP IN PRICE IS UN-AVOIDABLE.
...WHEAT IS ALREADY BEING BOUGHT UP AT A HIGH PRICE TO BE SENT TO THE BATTLEFIELD.
CHURCHES ACROSS THE LAND ARE BEGINNING TO SEIZE IRON.
EVEN CHURCH BELLS ARE BEING REMOVED TO RECAST THEM INTO WEAPONS.
THIS IS TRUE AS WELL.

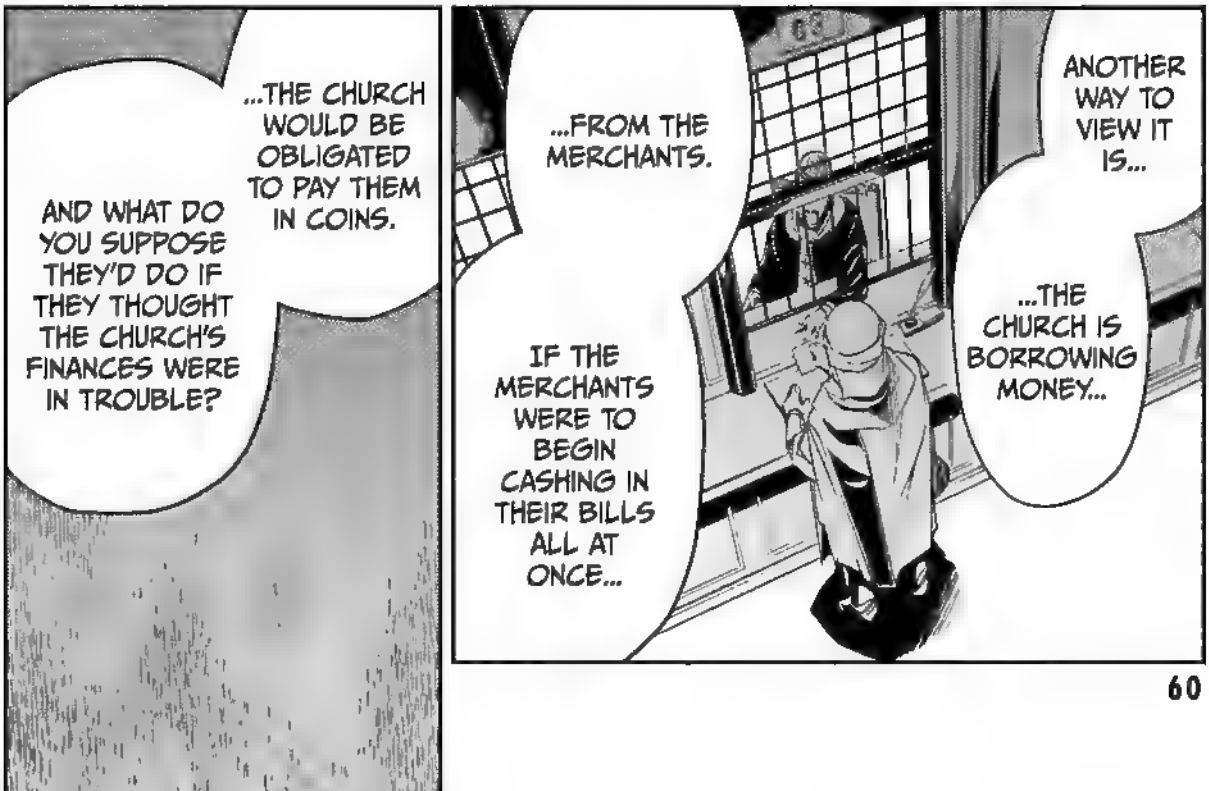

IS THAT...
...A LIE?
THEIR MONEY ORDER BUSINESS IS ABOUT TO COLLAPSE.
...THE CHURCH OF HOLY LIGHT'S FINANCES ARE IN TROUBLE.
...BE-CAUSE OF ALL THIS...
AND...

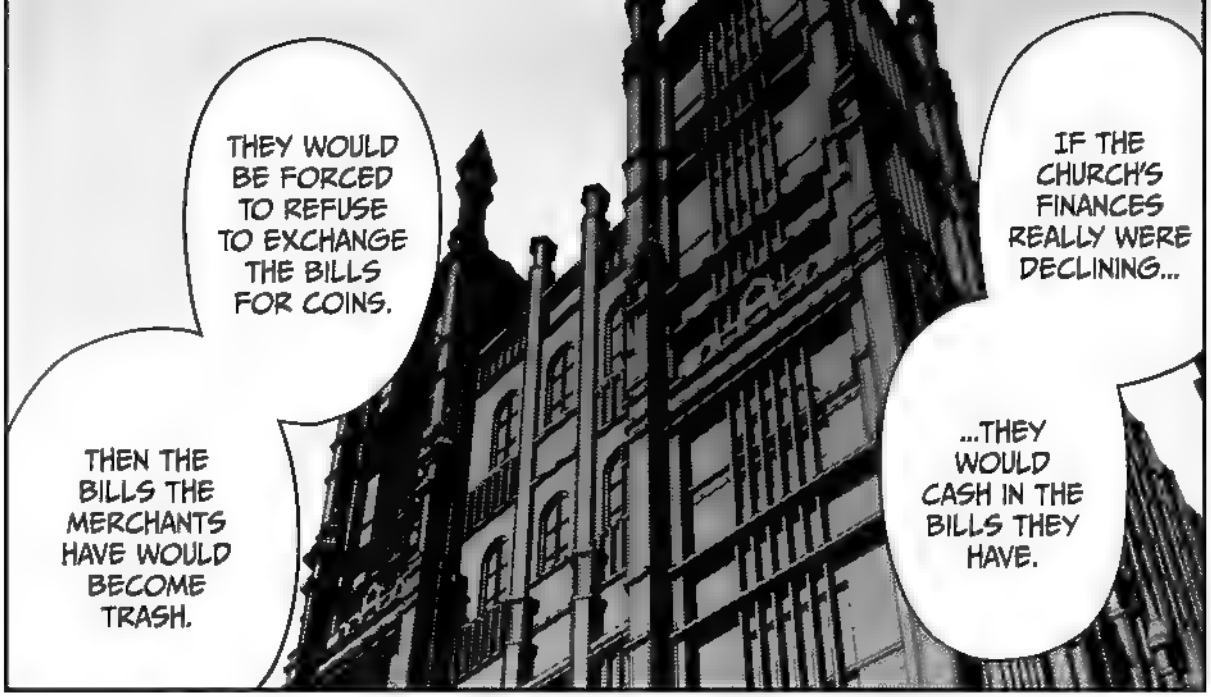

WHAT?
HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?
...BUT IT IS NO "ORDINARY LIE."
IT IS A LIE...


...IF HE DEPOSITS 100 GOLD COINS, HE IS ISSUED A BILL OF EXCHANGE GUARANTEEING HE WILL BE PAID 90 GOLD COINS.
FOR EX-AMPLE...
A BILL OF EXCHANGE IS ISSUED WHEN A MERCHANT DEPOSITS HIS MONEY AT THE CHURCH.
THE MERCHANT PAYS A TENTH OF THE AMOUNT AS A SERVICE FEE.
HE'LL LOSE MONEY, BUT THE BILL...
...CAN BE EXCHANGED FOR COINS AT ANY CHURCH.

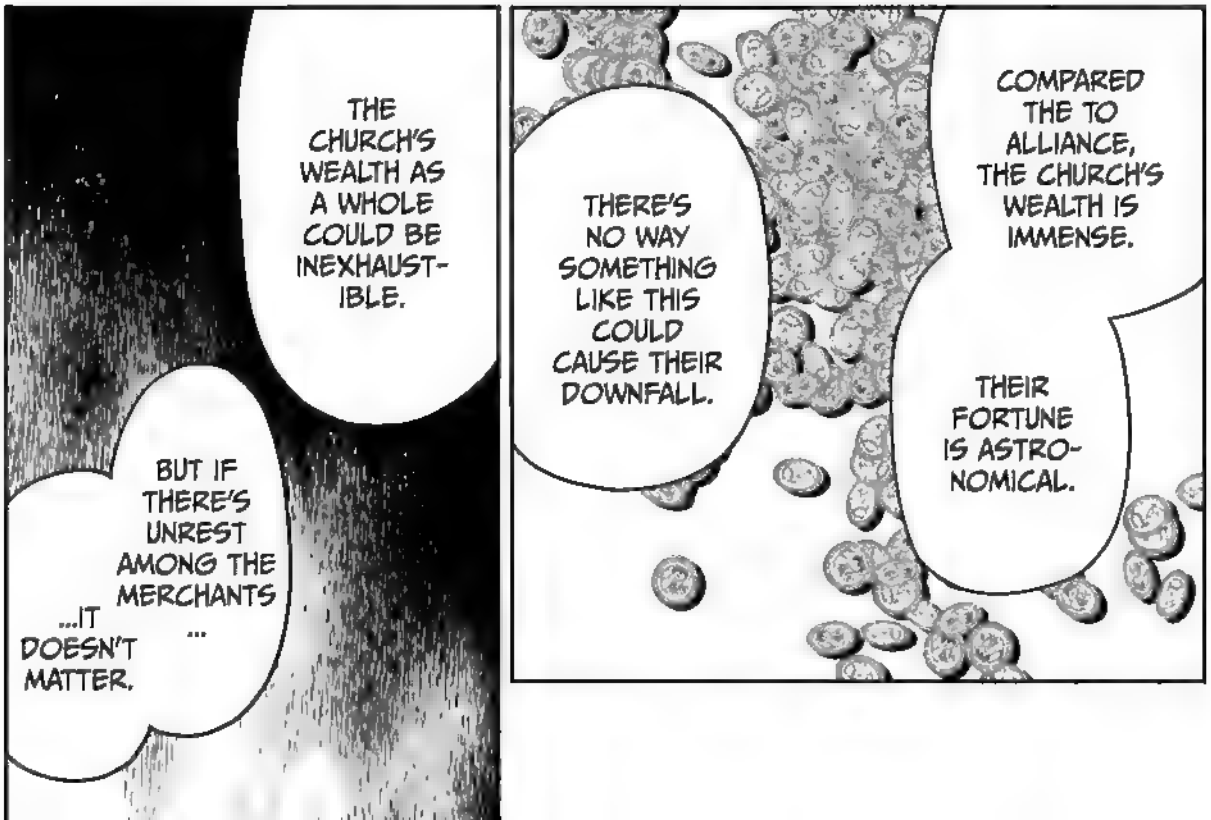
HOW-EVER...
...NOT ALL BILLS CAN BE CONVERTED TO COINS AT ONCE.
BILLS CAN BE TRANSPORTED MUCH MORE SAFELY THAN COINS...
...AND BILLS THEMSELVES ARE SOME-TIMES USED IN TRADES.
YES.
I WAS ANXIOUS, BUT I GOT IT HERE IN ONE PIECE.

IN OTHER WORDS ...
...THE NUMBER OF BILLS THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN EXCHANGED FOR COINS...
...SHOULD BE QUITE HIGH BY NOW.


ANOTHER WAY TO VIEW IT IS...
...THE CHURCH IS BORROWING MONEY...
...FROM THE MERCHANTS.
IF THE MERCHANTS WERE TO BEGIN CASHING IN THEIR BILLS ALL AT ONCE...
...THE CHURCH WOULD BE OBLIGATED TO PAY THEM IN COINS.
AND WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY'D DO IF THEY THOUGHT THE CHURCH'S FINANCES WERE IN TROUBLE?


IF THE CHURCH'S FINANCES REALLY WERE DECLINING...
...THEY WOULD CASH IN THE BILLS THEY HAVE.
THEY WOULD BE FORCED TO REFUSE TO EXCHANGE THE BILLS FOR COINS.
THEN THE BILLS THE MERCHANTS HAVE WOULD BECOME TRASH.

IS THE CHURCH REALLY GOING TO COLLAPSE?
AS IF!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH THE CHURCH'S FINANCES WERE STRAINED...
...THEY ARE NOT THAT WEAK.


COMPARED THE TO ALLIANCE, THE CHURCH'S WEALTH IS IMMENSE.
THERE'S NO WAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS COULD CAUSE THEIR DOWNFALL.
THEIR FORTUNE IS ASTRO-NOMICAL.
THE CHURCH'S WEALTH AS A WHOLE COULD BE INEXHAUST-IBLE.
BUT IF THERE'S UNREST AMONG THE MERCHANTS ...
...IT DOESN'T MATTER.

SO THEN...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HAVE YOU FOR-GOT-TEN?
TRANS-PORTING COINS...
...IS A RISKY VENTURE THAT TAKES TIME.
OH!
THE CHURCH IN THE CAPITAL OF THE HOLY KINGDOM MAY HAVE MONEY...
...BUT THAT MONEY HASN'T REACHED THE FRINGES.
RUMORS SPREAD FAR FASTER THAN THE CHURCH CAN TRANS-PORT MONEY.
EVEN IF THEY CAN HANDLE IT...
...BECAUSE THEY WILL BE REACTING TO THE SUDDEN SITUATION, THEY WILL ALREADY BE BEHIND.
TRANSPORTING MONEY IS A COMPLICATED PROCESS.
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO SATISFY THE PANICKED MERCHANTS' DEMAND FOR MONEY.

THAT TIME LAG WILL DETERMINE WHO WINS THIS BATTLE.

BOOM

ROAR

I STILL CAN'T WRAP MY HEAD AROUND THE FACT THAT MY MASTER IS ACTUALLY THE DEMON QUEEN.
GET USED TO IT.
WHAT'S THE SITUA-TION?

MURMUR
THE DEMON QUEEN ?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HOW ARE THINGS HERE?
IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'RE LACKING?

MATERIALS GET EXHAUSTED, AND THERE ARE CRACKS IN KEY SECTIONS.
EVEN THE STRONGEST SECTIONS COULD ONLY LAST A WEEK.
HONESTLY, WE'RE AP-PROACHING OUR LIMIT.
IT WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME IF A FEW PLACES COLLAPSED AT ANY TIME.

WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.
BUT...
...IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME...

DON'T LOOK SO DOWN-CAST.
IT'S NOT OVER YET.
DEMON QUEEN.
AT THIS RATE, THE CITY...

THEY WILL NOT BEAT US IN STRENGTH.
I UNDER-STAND NOW.
AH.
THE HUMAN ARMY IS MASSIVE...
..AND THEIR ATTACK NEVER ENDS.
...WE'VE NEARLY RUN OUT OF SUPPLIES TO BUILD AND REPAIR THE WALLS.
THOUGH WE STILL HAVE PLENTY OF FOOD IN THIS CITY WE'RE HOLED UP IN...
THIS WAR IS BEING CON-TROLLED BY THE QUANTITY OF OUR SUPPLIES.
WARS ARE NOT FOUGHT ONLY ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.
THE MERCHANT'S WORDS HIT HOME NOW.
..AND THEIR SUPPLIES ARE LIMIT-LESS.
...THE HUMAN ARMY'S ATTACK NEVER CEASES...
MEAN-WHILE ...

COULD YOU TAKE THIS TO ARCHDUKE FIRE DRAGON?
YES!

....
PRINCESS FIRE DRAGON!

THIS LETTER IS...
... BLANK ?!

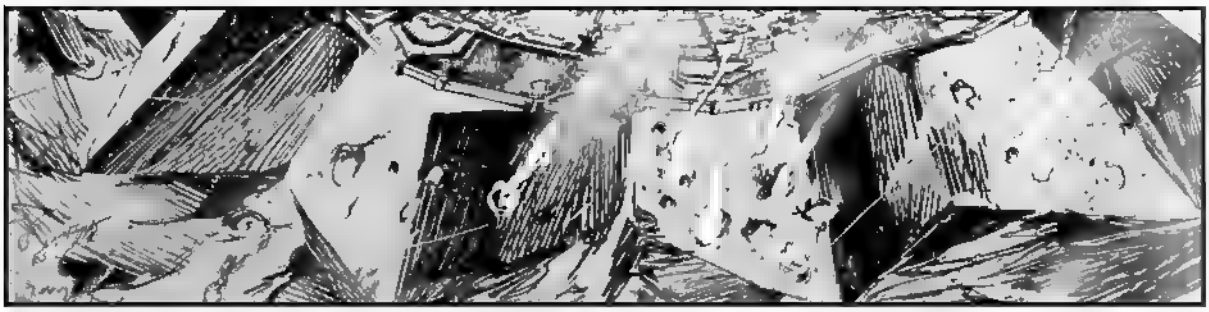
OOH おおお
A REQUEST FOR REINFORCEMENTS.
WHAT IS IT...?

COME NOW!
DON'T LOOK SO GLOOMY!
THIS IS GATEWAY CITY, THE CITY OF FREEDOM!
WE MUST BUY TIME UNTIL THEN.
THE SPIRIT WORLD IS VAST.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF WARRIORS LEFT WHO CAN SAVE THIS CITY.

CHEER おおお
WE WILL PROTECT THIS CITY!
FOR TOMORROW!
おおお
CHEER

...WHAT CHIEF WOULD SEND HIS SOLDIERS?
EVEN IF IT DID...
...IN THE FACE OF THOSE MUSKETS THAT MADE 30,000 CORPSES IN HALF A DAY...
SUCH A FORCE DOESN'T EXIST.
おお CHEER
..AND SHE SENDS ME WITH A BLANK LETTER TO AVOID SAYING IT OUT LOUD.
MY FATHER'S BLAZING MOUNTAIN RANGE WILL BE HER NEXT BASE OF DEFENSE...
...SHE WON'T ALLOW THE WOUND TO SPREAD ACROSS THE ENTIRE SPIR-IT WORLD.
WHAT THE DEMON QUEEN IS LOOKING FOR IS INSURANCE. EVEN IF GATEWAY CITY FALLS...
RUSTLE
FOR DUKE SILVER TIGER, WHO GAVE HIS LIFE PROTECTING THE DEMON QUEEN AND THIS CITY...
FOR THE MANY HEROES RISKING THEIR LIVES FOR THIS CITY, WHAT CAN I...
AT THIS RATE, THIS CITY...
BUT WHAT CAN I DO?
YOU ...!
...YOU'RE IN TROU-BLE?

I MUST SEE HIM...!
...!
YES!
DO YOU WANT TO GO THE SURFACE AGAIN?

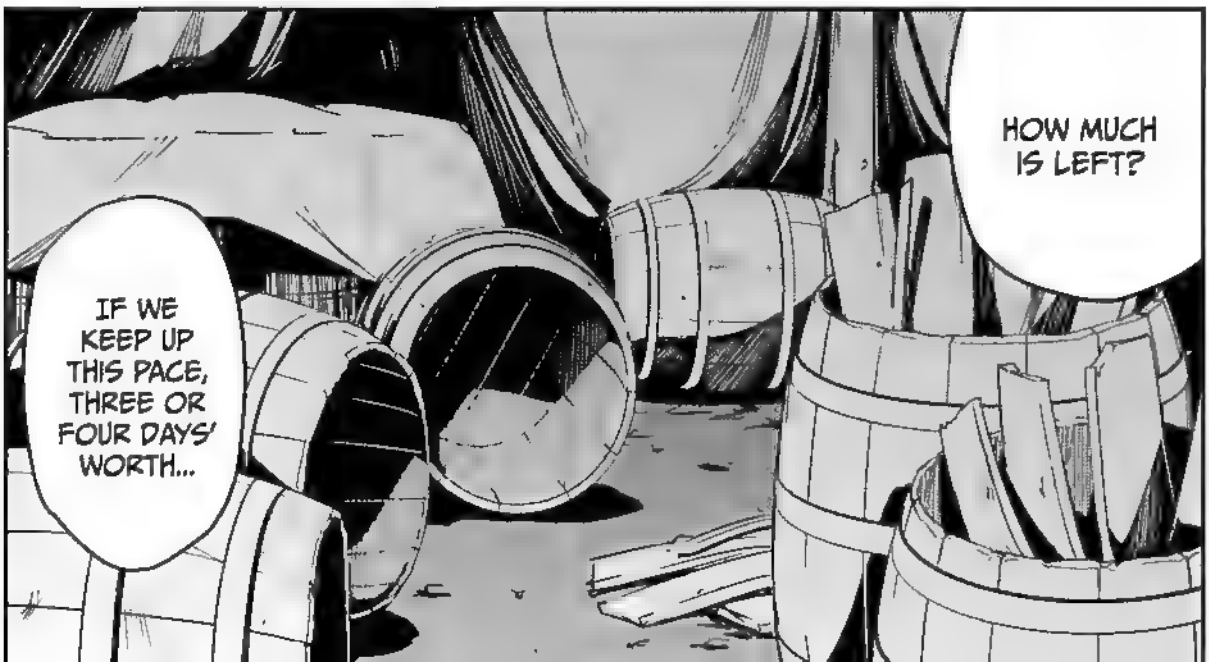


DAMN THAT BLUE ASH KING!
THEY CALL HIM A HERO, BUT HE'S LUKEWARM!
WHY ISN'T THE CONTINUOUS CANNON FIRE PRODUCING ANY RESULTS?

IF THE SUPPLIES CONTINUE TO BE DELAYED ...
...THE SERFS COULD START A LARGE-SCALE REBELLION...
AT THIS RATE, OUR REMAINING GUNPOWDER...
WE'LL RUN OUT OF FOOD FIRST!
THIS ISN'T WHAT WE WERE PROMISED!
WHERE ARE THE SUPPLIES ?
!!
AND THEN YOU'LL GIVE THOSE ENRAGED SERFS MUSKETS?!
WE CAN KEEP THE SERFS IN CHECK THROUGH FORCE!
IF WE KILL A HANDFUL TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF THEM, THE REST WILL FALL IN LINE LIKE SHEEP.
TSK!
WE MUST DO SOMETHING...
YOU'LL LET ENRAGED SERFS WATCH YOUR BACK ON THE BATTLEFIELD?
WITH MUSKETS, NO LESS ...

BLUE ASH KING.
YOUR INSTRUC-TIONS FOR TODAY'S BOM-BARD-MENT...
FOCUS YOUR FIRE ON THE RIGHT END.
HAVE A QUARTER OF THE CANNONS SCATTER THEIR FIRE.
DON'T LET OUR ENEMIES FEEL SECURE OR GIVE THEM TIME TO REST.
YES ...
YES, SIR!

UM...
WHAT'S WRONG ?
ACTUALLY, THE HIGH-PURITY BLACK POWDER FOR THE CANNONS IS...
....


HOW MUCH IS LEFT?
IF WE KEEP UP THIS PACE, THREE OR FOUR DAYS' WORTH...

DON'T LET UP ON THE CANNON FIRE.
GIVING OUR ENEMIES HOPE BY LETTING THEM KNOW ABOUT THE GUNPOWDER SITUATION IS A POOR PLAN.
WE'LL HANDLE IT BY REDISTRIBUTING THE MUSKETMENS' GUNPOWDER...
...AND USING IT TO SUPPLY THE CANNONS.

KEEP FIRING THE WAY YOU ARE.
IF WE CAN DESTROY THE RIGHT END...
...WE CAN BRING DOWN THE FRONT GATES AND ENTER THE CITY.

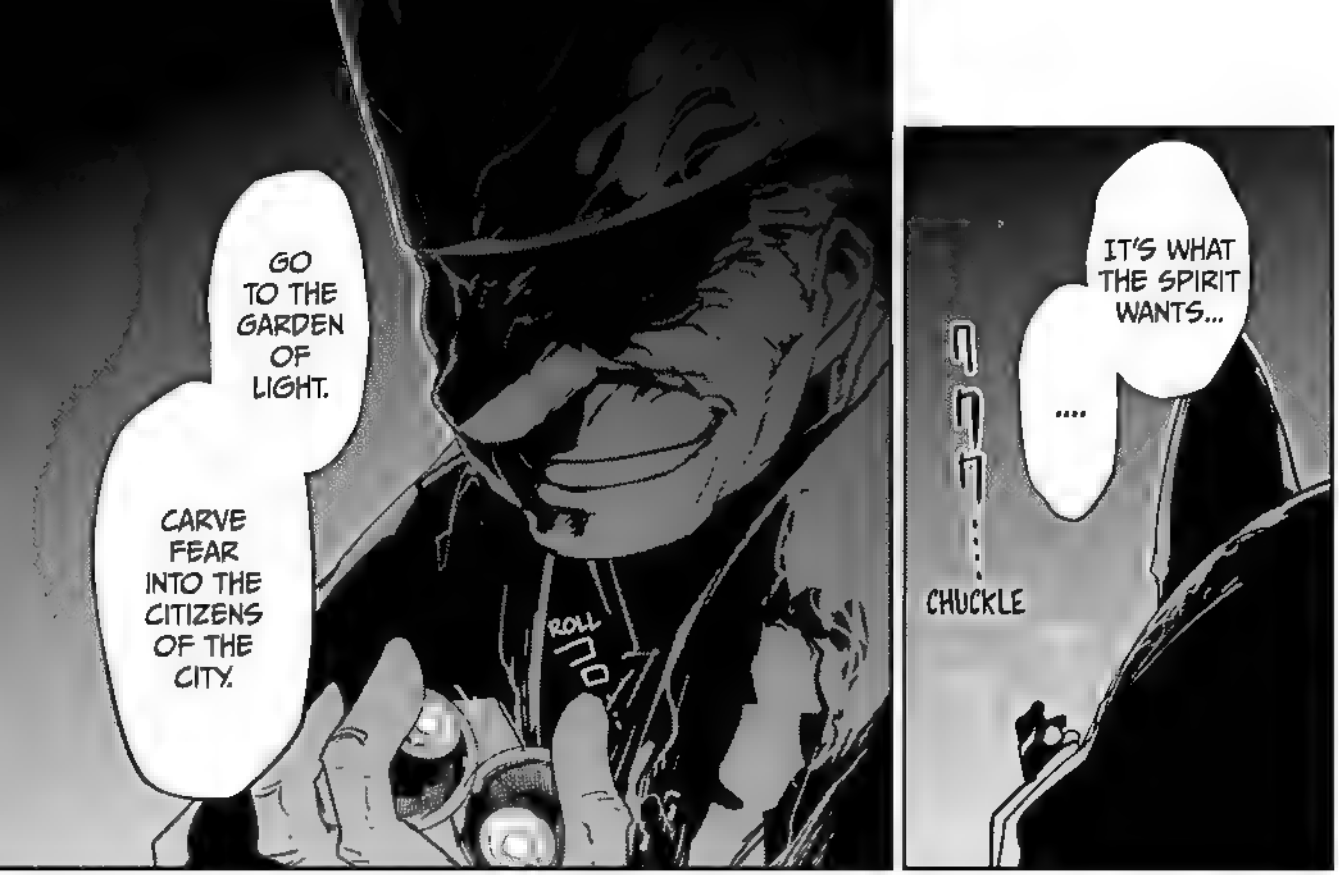
....
TSK!
THEY'RE TOUGH.

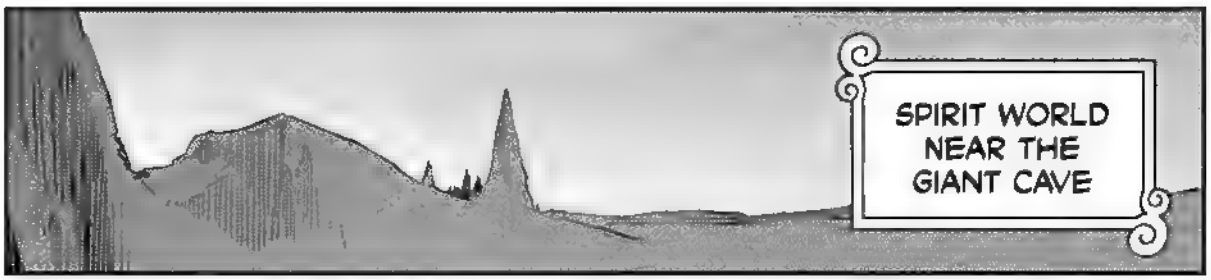
YES, SIR!
WE'LL WORK DILIGENTLY!
RUSTLE

BLUE ASH KING!
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW...
WHISPER
ヒソ…
...WHAT?
THE LILY KNIGHT CAPTAIN...
EVERY NIGHT SHE'S BEEN GATHERING LARGE NUMBERS OF MUSKETMEN.
IT'S NOT CLEAR IF IT'S SOME KIND OF MEETING OR SERMON.
A MEETING ...?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
...LEAVE THEM.
I'LL SETTLE IT EVENTUALLY.

A POISON-OUS FLOWER, HUH...
SHE'S TOUGH TO HANDLE BECAUSE HER POISON SMELLS SO SWEET.

DEVOUT FOLLOWERS.
THANK YOU FOR COMING.
THE SPIRIT BLESSES YOU, HER CHOSEN FOLLOWERS.
OOH
IT'S BREAD
THANK YOU!
THE SPIRIT'S TREASURE IS WITHIN GATEWAY CITY.
THE EVIL DEMONS HAVE STOLEN AND HIDDEN THAT TREASURE.
WE MUST TAKE DOWN THAT CITY NOW.
TO DO THAT, THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LIGHT MUST OFFER THEIR SOULS IN SERVICE OF THE LIGHT.
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS.
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS.
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS.
PUT YOURSELVES IN THE HANDS OF THE SPIRIT.
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS.
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS.


GO TO THE GARDEN OF LIGHT.
CARVE FEAR INTO THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY.
ROLL
IT'S WHAT THE SPIRIT WANTS...
....
CHUCKLE

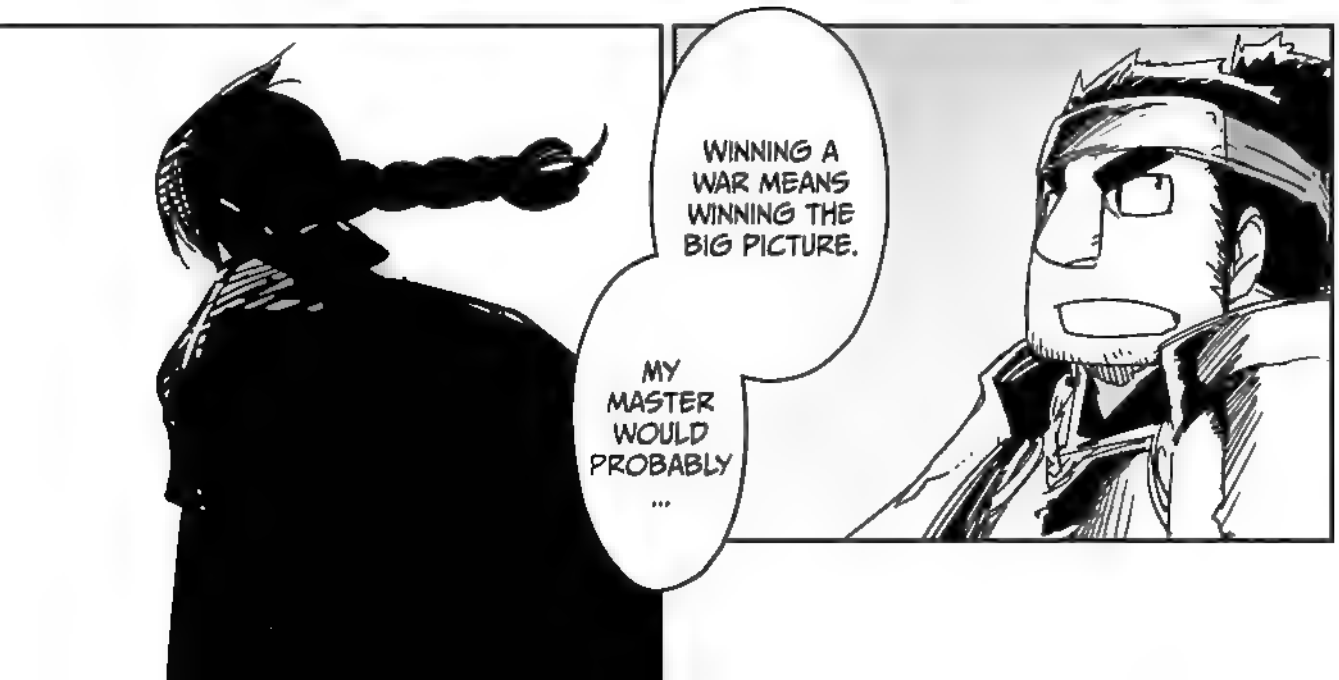

SPIRIT WORLD NEAR THE GIANT CAVE

ALL RIGHT.
ORDER AN ADVANCE GROUP TO GO ON AHEAD.
IT WILL TAKE ANOTHER DAY AND A HALF TO CROSS THE GIANT CAVE!
REPORT FROM THE REAR COMPANY, SIR!

I'M IM-PRESSED.
SINCE WE DECIDED TO GO, WE MADE IT THIS FAR IN A WEEK.
WE HAVE THE COOPERATION OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION TO THANK.
ABSO-LUTELY.
THESE CLOTHES ARE RATHER WARM.
WARM!
I HAD NO IDEA THE SOLDIER'S SON HAD SO MANY EXTRA SETS OF COLD WEATHER CLOTHES IN STORE.
...HE EXPECTED THIS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HE WASN'T ABOUT TO LET ONLY THOSE OF US HEADED TO THE BATTLE-FIELD DO THE FIGHTING.
...I SEE.

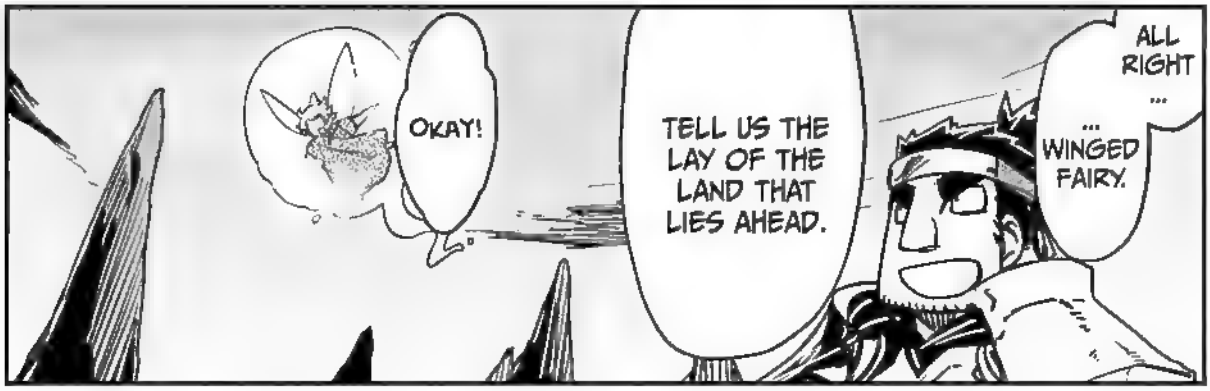
BUT I DON'T BELIEVE WE CAN WIN AN ALL-OUT WAR.
IN-DEED ...
NOT AGAINST THE MUS-KETS.

WE CAN'T SEND FOOT SOLDIERS OR CAVALRY CHARGING STRAIGHT INTO A VOLLEY OF MUSKET FIRE.
OF COURSE, WE DO HAVE A FEW USABLE OPTIONS.
FROM A BROAD STANDPOINT, THEY CANNOT BE BEATEN WITH A TRICK PLAN.


WINNING A WAR MEANS WINNING THE BIG PICTURE.
MY MASTER WOULD PROBABLY ...

I DON'T PLAN TO LOSE!
IF I THINK WE'RE GOING TO LOSE, I'LL RUN.
SMILE

?
NEVER MIND.
IT'S NOTHING.
THAT ISN'T MY ROLE.


ALL RIGHT ...
... WINGED FAIRY.
TELL US THE LAY OF THE LAND THAT LIES AHEAD.
OKAY!

HOLY CAPITAL OCTAGONAL PALACE

I AM A MERCHANT BASED IN THE LAKE KINGDOM CONDUCTING BUSINESS ACROSS THE CONTINENT.
I AM CALLED THE YOUNG MERCHANT.
ALLOW ME TO INTRO-DUCE MYSELF.
NICE TO MEET YOU.

STEP

I SEE.
HOLY KING
IT IS A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE...
...HOLY KING.
NOW THEN, MERCHANT.
I'M TOLD YOU HAVE A SUGGESTION FOR THE HOLY KINGDOM BASED ON YOUR FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL POSITION.
I AM THE MINISTER OF STATE.
AND I AM THE CLERGYMAN WHO SERVES THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.

THE ALLIANCE HAS BEGUN HANDLING MONEY ORDERS AT SOME OF OUR OFFICES.
IT'S MADE US RATHER POPULAR.
I'D APPRECIATE IF...
...YOU WOULD GRANT US PERMISSION TO ENGAGE IN THE MONEY ORDER BUSINESS AND ISSUE A ROYAL WRIT.
FIRST, I HAVE A REQUEST ...
ISSUING MONEY ORDERS IS THE CHURCH'S BUSINESS.
WE ESTABLISHED THIS BUSINESS...
...TO FOSTER MUTUAL AID BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LIGHT SCATTERED ACROSS THE NATIONS.
YOUR MAJESTY!
I AM OPPOSED TO THIS IDEA!
RUSTLE
HANDLING MONEY REQUIRES A GREAT AMOUNT OF TRUST.
IT DOES NOT WORK...
...WITHOUT THE TRUST REQUIRED TO MAKE PROMISES TO PAY AND LEND MONEY.
ALLOWING A RISING TRADE GUILD TO DO THIS KIND OF WORK WOULD BE A MISTAKE.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MINISTER OF STATE ...
...DOES THIS NATION'S LAW HAVE A PROVISION REQUIRING AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE IN THE MONEY ORDER BUSINESS?
WELL ...
NO, I DON'T BELIEVE SO.
THERE IS NO SUCH LAW...
...BECAUSE IT WAS OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE THAT ONLY THE CHURCH...
...WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE BUSINESS!
THE ALLIANCE ACTUALLY USES THE CHURCH'S MONEY ORDER SERVICE.
CLERGYMAN.
WE'LL REFORM THE LAW IMMEDIATELY, AND...
I WENT TO A FREE CITY ON THE WEST COAST TO GET MY BILL EXCHANGED FOR CASH...
...BUT I WAS REFUSED.
TROUBLED, I WENT TO THE NEIGHBORING CITY...
...BUT I WAS REFUSED THERE AS WELL.
I WAS ACTUALLY REFUSED AT FIVE LOCATIONS.
....

WE ...
WELL ...
FOR A TIME...
IS THAT TRUE...
...CLER-GY-MAN?
I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.
THERE IS MASS CONFUSION AMONG THE MERCHANTS ON THE WEST COAST.
NO, MASS PANIC.
THIS IS A PETITION SIGNED BY FIVE THOUSAND MERCHANTS BASED ON THE WEST COAST.
THE CHURCH WON'T RETURN THE MONEY THEY DEPOSITED ...
...THEY SAY.
THIS IS ACTUALLY ONE OF THE REASONS I'VE COME TO VISIT...
...YOUR MAJESTY THIS DAY.
YOUR INABILITY TO EXCHANGE THE BILLS FOR CASH WILL DELAY TRADES, COSTING TIME AND PERSONNEL.
DO YOU THINK NOTHING OF THESE LOSSES?
YOU MEAN "EVENTU-ALLY"?
DON'T BE ABSURD.
WE WILL EXCHANGE THE BILLS FOR COINS!

WE'LL OFFER COMPENSATION FOR ALL LOSSES.
...WHAT SHOULD WE, THE MERCHANTS WHOSE TRUST HAS BEEN HURT BY THAT CHURCH...
...DO WITH OUR FAITH?
TRUST IN THE CHURCH?
IF SUCH A THING TRULY DOES EXIST...
WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY SELL THAT!
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF, APOSTATE!
HOW MUCH WOULD THE CHURCH'S TRUST YOU MENTIONED EARLIER...
...COST IN GOLD COINS?
SO TRUST CAN BE BOUGHT WITH MONEY?
THEN WE SHALL BUY IT AS WELL.
YOUR MAJESTY, YOU ARE ALSO THE KINGDOM'S JUDICIAL HEAD.
THE QUICKEST WAY TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION WOULD BE TO DEFER TO YOUR JUDGMENT.
BUT...
...WHAT CAN WE DO?
THAT'S ENOUGH.
FORGIVE ME.

CLERGY-MAN.
YOU SAID YOU WOULD PAY FOR ALL THE DAMAGES.
SO YOU ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU DAMAGED THE TRUST...
...OF THE WEST COAST'S MERCHANTS?
YES.
I ADMIT IT.
YES.
HMM.
YOU'RE RIGHT.

A HUNDRED THOUSAND GOLD COINS.
THAT'S MORE THAN PLENTY.
HOW MUCH WOULD BE APPROPRIATE...
...CLERGYMAN?
...IT WOULD ALSO BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO COMPENSATE THEM FOR THE TRUST YOU ABUSED.
BESIDES ALL THE DAMAGES ...

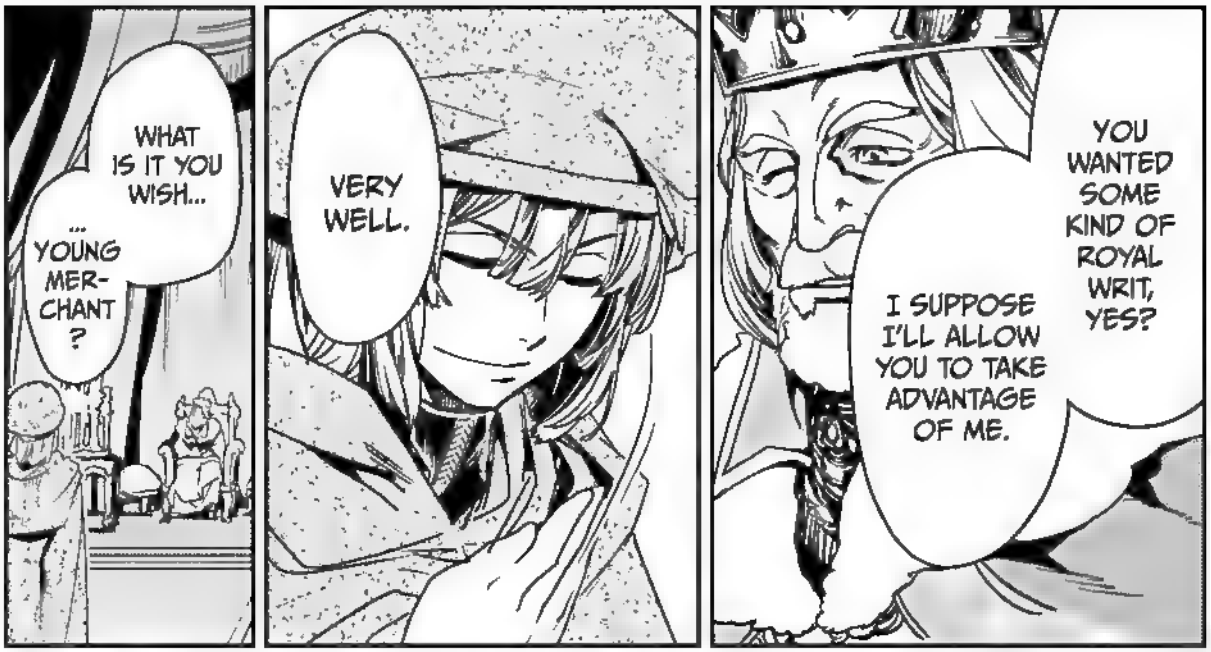
SO YOU'RE ALL ABOUT MONEY ...
...YOU VULGAR MAN.
TSK
I AM IMPRESSED BY THE INSIGHT OF A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF HOLY LIGHT.
THAT AMOUNT IS FAR TOO MUCH FOR MY TRUST ALONE.
VERY WELL.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, YOUNG MERCHANT?

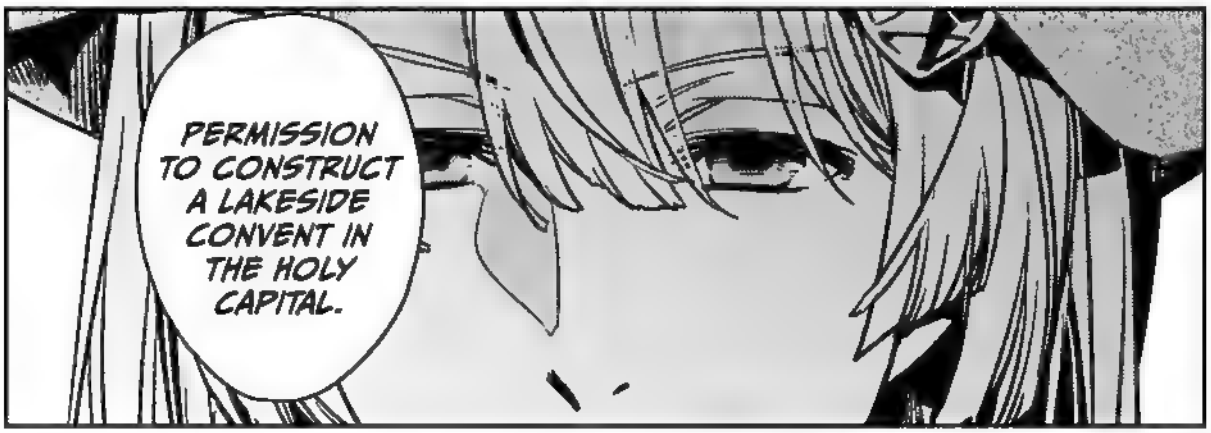
VERY WELL.
WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY AN ADDITIONAL 50 PERCENT OF THE AMOUNT OF THE DAMAGES...
...AS COMPEN-SATION?
BUT...
...THIS PETITION CONTAINS THE NAMES OF 5,000 MERCHANTS.
THEN WE'RE DONE HERE.
I PROMISE I'LL BE THERE.
CER-TAINLY.
WHEN WILL YOU PAY?
WHEN YOU LEAVE THE CASTLE TODAY, YOU CAN STOP BY THE CHURCH AND TAKE IT WITH YOU.
IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH?
?!
WHAT?
THE TOTAL AMOUNT COMES TO 84 MILLION GOLD COINS.

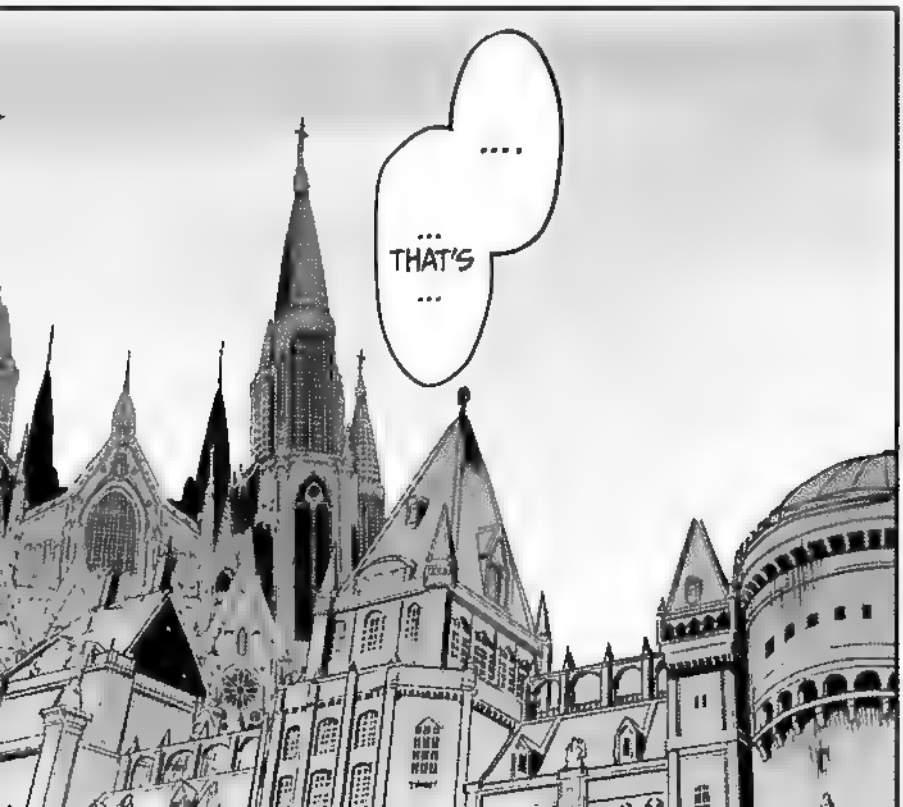
WHERE DID THAT NUMBER COME FROM?
FIRST, THERE'S THE VALUE OF THE BILLS OF EXCHANGE.
THAT TOTALS SEVEN MILLION COINS.
YOU'RE AWARE OF THE CURRENT PRICE OF CHARCOAL, YES?
WITH THE CENTRAL CONTINENT'S AND SOUTH'S CUSTOMS DUTIES AS WELL AS TRANSPORTATION COSTS, IT COSTS ROUGHLY 16 TIMES THE PURCHASE PRICE.
NOT ALL OF IT IS SPENT IN THIS WAY...
...SO SEVEN MILLION TIMES EIGHT IS 56 MILLION.
WITH THE 50 PERCENT COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGED CREDIT...
...IT COMES TO 84 MILLION COINS.
NATURALLY, IF YOU'RE NOT ABLE TO PAY OUT 84 MILLION COINS TODAY...
THE SAME CALCULATION WILL BE REPEATED AGAIN.
...THIS WILL CAUSE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS.
THE NEW VALUE WOULD BE ONE BILLION EIGHT MILLION COINS.
SHOULD YOU DELAY AGAIN...
ENOUGH!

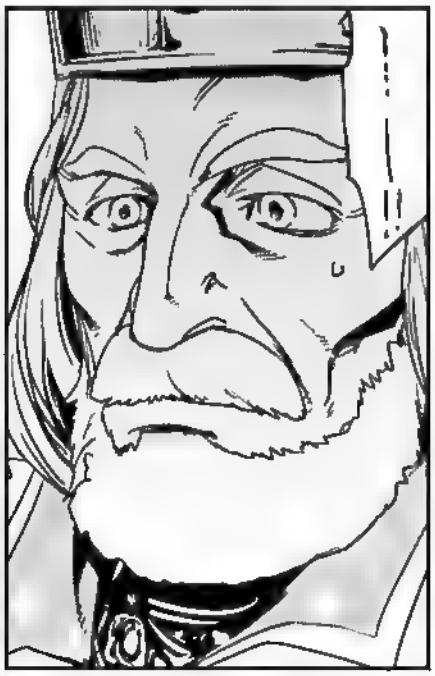
YOUR MAJ-ESTY.
YOUR ...
あはははは
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
...
HEH
EXCUSE ME!
...IN A COUPLE DAYS, YOUR DEBT WILL BALLOON EVEN MORE.
IF YOU DON'T GATHER THE FUNDS OF THE HOLY CAPITAL'S CHURCHES...
SHOULDN'T YOU BE GOING?
SLAM
MINIS-TER OF STATE!
WE NEED TO DIS-CUSS FINANC-ES!
I MUST BE GOING AS WELL.
I DON'T THINK I'VE LAUGHED THAT MUCH SINCE I WAS A BOY.
CHUCKLE
WON-DERFUL.
I WAS ONCE MADE TO LAUGH LIKE THAT AS WELL.

NOW THEN.
I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF NOW.
YOU MENTIONED A ROYAL WRIT.
IT SEEMS I'LL HAVE TO WRITE ONE UP...
...AS SECURITY FOR A LOAN.
THE CLERGYMAN IS DETERMINED TO PAY OFF THE 84 MILLION COINS TODAY NO MATTER WHAT.
IF WE EMPTY THE COFFERS OF ALL THE HOLY CAPITAL'S CHURCHES AND THE ROYAL PALACE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD IT.
BUT USING THE FUNDS OF THE NATIONAL TREASURY WITHOUT MY PERMISSION IS A CAPITAL CRIME
TO SAVE THEM, WE'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT YOUR CONDITIONS AND PAY OFF OUR DEBT.
YOU...
YOU'RE VERY INSIGHTFUL, YOUR MAJESTY.
I CAN HANDLE THIS MUCH.
YOU LEARN TO THINK WHEN YOU'VE GOT A SMART YOUNGER BROTHER.
はははは HA HA HA
IT'S GOOD MEDICINE FOR THEM.
THAT SAID...
...IT CAN'T BE HELPED IF THE DOSE WAS SO STRONG THEY END UP HANGING THEMSELVES.

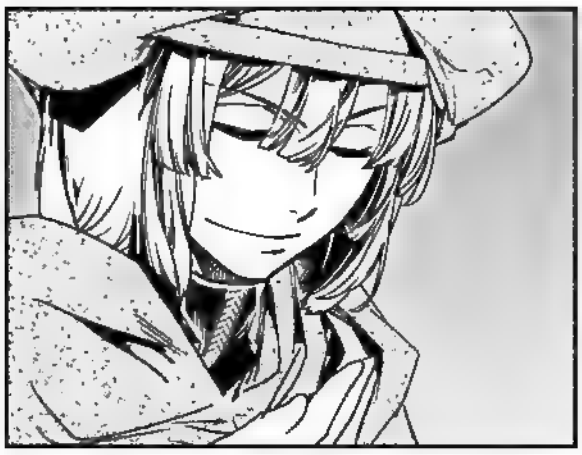

WHAT IS IT YOU WISH...
...YOUNG MER-CHANT?
VERY WELL.
YOU WANTED SOME KIND OF ROYAL WRIT, YES?
I SUPPOSE I'LL ALLOW YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME.

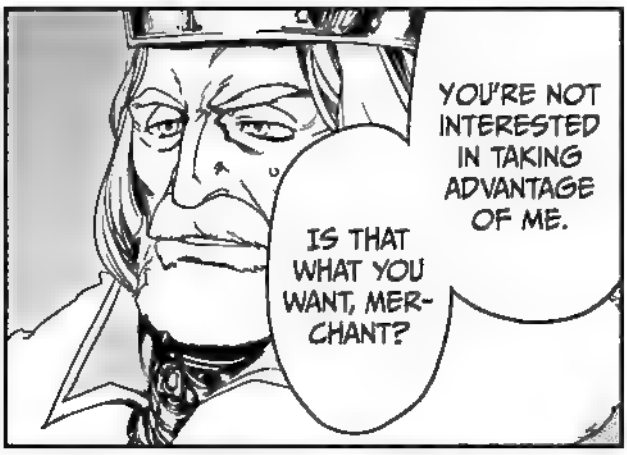

PERMISSION TO CONSTRUCT A LAKESIDE CONVENT IN THE HOLY CAPITAL.

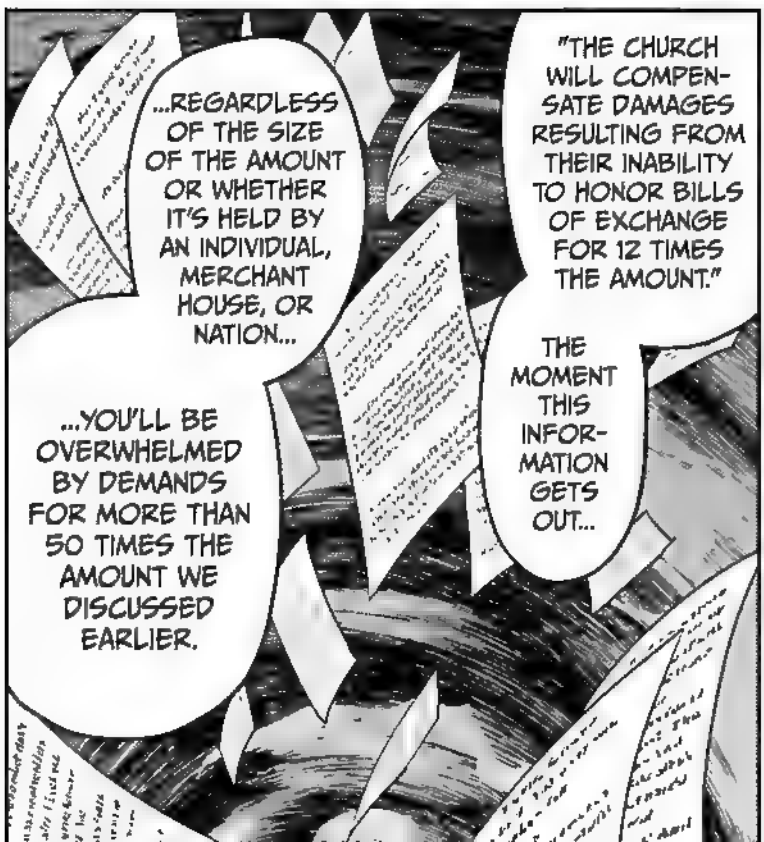

....
...THAT'S...

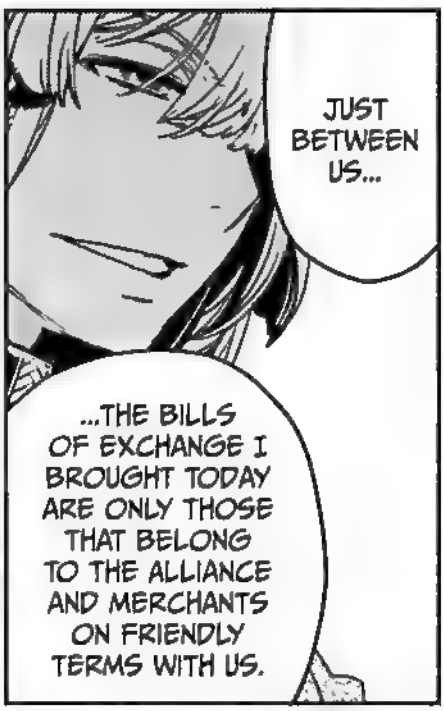

!!

I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO CUT TIES WITH THE CHURCH OF HOLY LIGHT.
I UNDERSTAND THE ROYAL FAMILY HAS EMBRACED THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH.
IT WOULD SIMPLY MEAN KEEPING TWO CHURCHES BORN FROM THE SAME FAITH...
...AT YOUR MAJESTY'S SIDES.
THEY WOULD COEXIST.




YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ME.
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT, MERCHANT?


"THE CHURCH WILL COMPENSATE DAMAGES RESULTING FROM THEIR INABILITY TO HONOR BILLS OF EXCHANGE FOR 12 TIMES THE AMOUNT."
...REGARDLESS OF THE SIZE OF THE AMOUNT OR WHETHER IT'S HELD BY AN INDIVIDUAL, MERCHANT HOUSE, OR NATION...
THE MOMENT THIS INFORMATION GETS OUT...
...YOU'LL BE OVERWHELMED BY DEMANDS FOR MORE THAN 50 TIMES THE AMOUNT WE DISCUSSED EARLIER.


JUST BETWEEN US...
...THE BILLS OF EXCHANGE I BROUGHT TODAY ARE ONLY THOSE THAT BELONG TO THE ALLIANCE AND MERCHANTS ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH US.

I THINK YOU UNDER-STAND...
...BUT THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE THE CHURCH OF HOLY LIGHT...
...IS TO ISSUE A ROYAL WRIT.

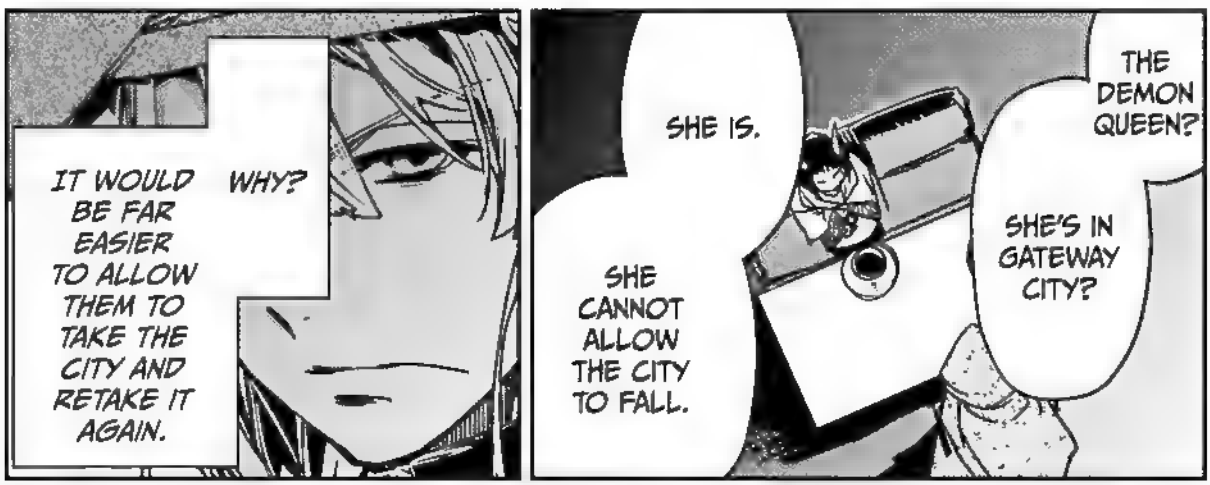
SPLISHHHH
LAKE KINGDOM CAPITAL
ALLIANCE HEADQUARTERS

IT'S REALLY COMING DOWN.
YOU CAN LEAVE FOR THE DAY.
SPLISHHHH
YES, SIR.
YES.
FOR NOW.
IT WENT WELL, COMMIT-TEEMAN.
SPLISHHHH

KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
WHO COULD IT BE SO LATE ON THIS RAINY NIGHT...?
CLATTER
CLICK
SPLISHHH
....
PRIN-CESS ...?

WHAT?
...HELP ME.
GATEWAY CITY IS ABOUT TO FALL.
PLEASE...
PLEASE HELP US.
I DO NOT ENJOY BOWING MY HEAD TO YOU.
BUT...
...THERE'S NO ONE ELSE I CAN TURN TO FOR HELP...
SPLISHHHH

GATEWAY CITY IS WITH-STANDING THEIR ASSAULT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DEMON QUEEN, BUT...
...TORMENTS THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY.
DAY AND NIGHT, THE THREAT OF THEIR CAN-NONS...
GATEWAY CITY IS SUR-ROUNDED BY 200,000 SOLDIERS OF THE EXPE-DITIONARY FORCE.
....


IT WOULD BE FAR EASIER TO ALLOW THEM TO TAKE THE CITY AND RETAKE IT AGAIN.
WHY?
SHE CANNOT ALLOW THE CITY TO FALL.
SHE IS.
SHE'S IN GATEWAY CITY?
THE DEMON QUEEN?

IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN PAY YOU, I WILL!
I'LL PAY WHATEVER YOU WANT!
I CANNOT.
STILL, SURELY YOU CAN--
I HAVE NO MILITARY POWER.
I AM A MER-CHANT.

....
I CANNOT FOLLOW THE PATH OF BUSINESS AFTER ALL.
WHEN WALKING THE PATH OF BUSINESS...
...YOU MUST NEVER OFFER "ANYTHING."
AS ONE WHO LIVED IN A VERY NARROW WORLD, ITS BRILLIANCE WAS BLINDING.
I ENJOYED TRAVELING THE WORLD WITH YOU.
VERY MUCH.
I WANT TO SEE THE FUTURE OF THAT CITY WHERE HUMANS AND DEMONS LIVE TOGETHER.
BESIDES, I LOVE THAT CITY.
BUT...
...I AM A DRAGON PRINCESS.
I CANNOT BETRAY MY PEOPLE.

YOU ACKNOWL-EDGED ME AS YOUR TRADING PARTNER.
BUT NOW THAT I'VE LET MY EMOTIONS GET THE BETTER OF ME AND HAVE LOST MY COMPO-SURE...
...YOU WILL SURELY FIND ME DESPI-CABLE.
NOW THAT I'VE COME TO YOU ON MY KNEES...
...YOU WILL NEVER SEE ME AS AN EQUAL AGAIN.

IT MAKES ME SAD.
BUT THERE IS NOT MUCH I CAN AFFORD.
ALL I CAN DO IS SUFFER YOUR CONTEMPT...
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS.
I'M SURE YOU...
... DON'T ...

EVEN IF THE SPIRIT WORLD LOSES FIVE OR 10 CITIES...
...IT WON'T HURT ITS MARKET-ABILITY OR VALUE.
THE ENTIRETY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD WILL NOT BE CONQUERED.
NO MATTER HOW LARGE THE HOLY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IS, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
A NEW WORLD BASED AROUND THE HOLY KINGDOM IN WHICH THE TRADE ZONES OF THE CHURCH OF HOLY LIGHT'S CULTURAL SPHERE...
...THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION...
...AND THE SPIRIT WORLD ...
...INTERTWINE IN A COMPLEX MANNER IS ABOUT TO BE BORN.
IT IS WHAT THE ALLIANCE AND I EXPECTED AND HOPED FOR.
IN A WORLD WHERE MERCHANTS ARE ABLE TO TRADE FREELY BETWEEN THESE THREE CULTURAL SPHERES...
...WE WOULD SEE GROWTH IN OUR POWER TENS OF TIMES OVER.

FOR THE DIGNITY OF DEMONS AND FOR HUMAN-KIND AS WELL.
I DON'T KNOW.
SHE SIMPLY SAID IT WAS FOR THE FUTURE.
WHY DIDN'T THE DEMON QUEEN LET GATEWAY CITY GO?
THE DEMON QUEEN SAID THAT?
NO, THAT CAN'T BE.
...OR ECO-NOMIC WORTH THAN WE THOUGHT?
DOES THE CITY HAVE MORE MILITARY...
WAS OUR VALUATION OF THAT CITY WRONG?

WHY CAN'T THEY AFFORD TO LOSE THAT CITY?
WHAT WOULD THEY LOSE BY LOSING THAT CITY?
THEN IT MUST BE CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS...
OR DOES IT HAVE SOME KIND OF SYMBOLIC VALUE?
....
WHY HAS THE DEMON QUEEN RETURNED TO THE CITY AT THIS TIME TO DEFEND IT?
"FOR HUMAN-KIND AS WELL."
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

CLATTER
!
MER-
CHANT
?
GRAB
THE DEMON QUEEN!
WERE THE DEMON QUEEN'S EYES RED?!
WERE THEY A POLISHED GRAPE WINE COLOR?!

DEFAULTS CAUSED BY A LOSS OF CREDIT

In the world of financial affairs where business is based on credit, it can be very difficult to reestablish credit once it has been lost.

...WITHOUT THE TRUST REQUIRED TO MAKE PROMISES TO PAY AND LEND MONEY
ALLOWING A RISING TRADE GUILD TO DO THIS KIND OF WORK WOULD BE A MISTAKE
HANDLING MONEY REQUIRES A GREAT AMOUNT OF TRUST
IT DOES NOT WORK...

Perhaps the Young Merchant sought permission to operate a money order business to draw out the phrase "necessity of trust."

"DEFAULTS" CAUSED EVEN BY RUMORS

The word "default" has many definitions, but in this case the definition that will be used is the financial terminology for the non-fulfillment of financial obligations. This term refers to the suspension of payment of principal or interest payments, or a delay in repayment by the issuer of the bond due to reasons such as bankruptcy.

The financial institution individuals are most familiar with is the bank. Banks collect the many small deposits made to the bank by numerous depositors, lend the total amount to corporations, and profit from the difference between the interest they gain from the companies they lend to and the interest paid out to their depositors. Depositing money at a bank is the same as loaning someone money through the bank. Banks are simultaneously creditors to the institutions they lend to and debtors to their depositors.

Additionally, if the money a bank lends is re-deposited at the bank, the bank will loan that money out to someone else and gradually increase the amount. This is called credit creation, and until the day loans are paid off, there exists in the market an amount greater than the actual cash amount, which can revitalize an economy.

However, this assumes the lender is able to fulfill his obligations without delay. When trust in a bank's numerous borrowers is lost, depositors feel anxious and begin withdrawing their deposits. However, the bank assumes a large number of withdrawals will not occur at once and does not keep cash on hand equal to amount of the deposits. Because of this, when a bank is unable to raise sufficient funds, it goes bankrupt and defaults.

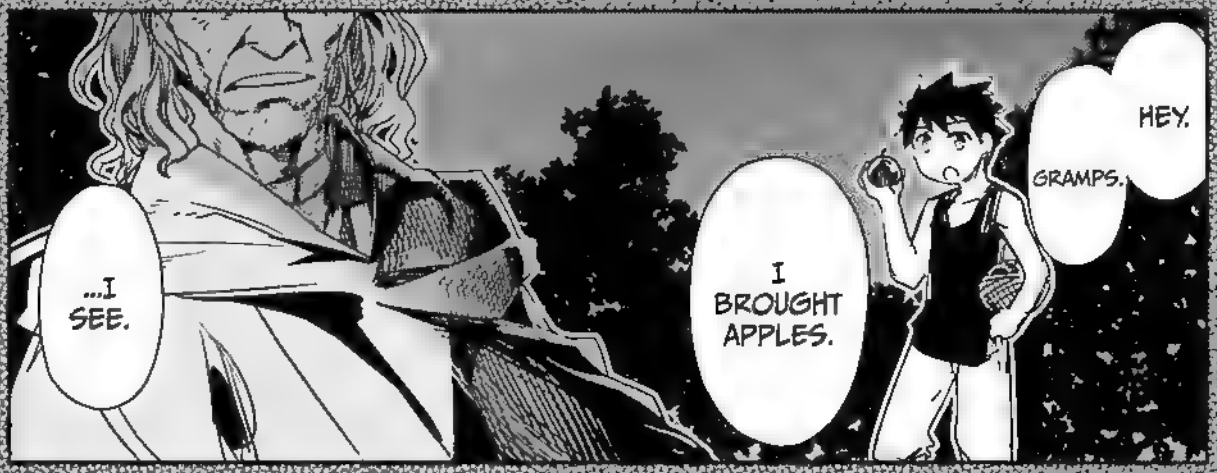
Defaults are scary because regardless of how well an institution is managed, they can happen due to mere rumors. This is known as a "run on the bank," and it has happened several times in Japan.

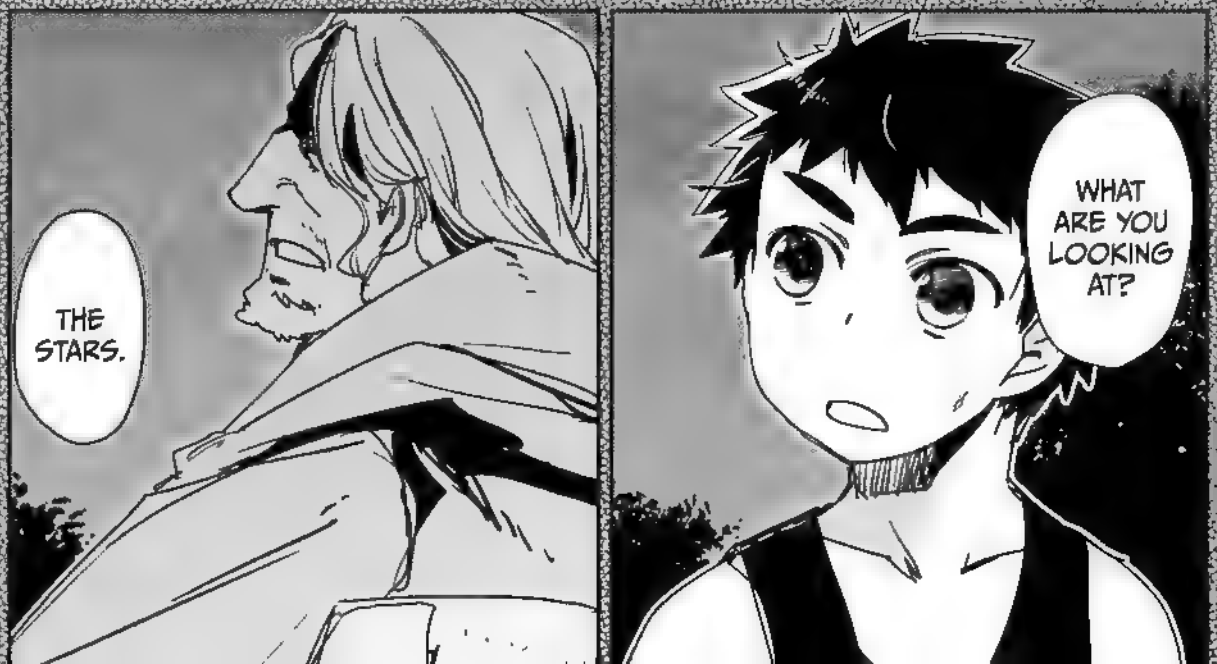
In Maoyu, the Young Merchant drops hints to the Clergyman about the possibility of a rumor-based run on the bank. He used the fact that the money order business is based on trust and that trust is not easily regained once it is lost as a bargaining chip to make demands of the Holy Kingdom and Church of Holy Light.

By taking hostage the "trust in the church" the church needs to operate its business, the Young Merchant came out ahead in his negotiations.

THE OTHER ONE

MAOYU
Archenemy and Hero
CHAPTER 49


HEY. GRAMPS.
I BROUGHT APPLES.
...I SEE.

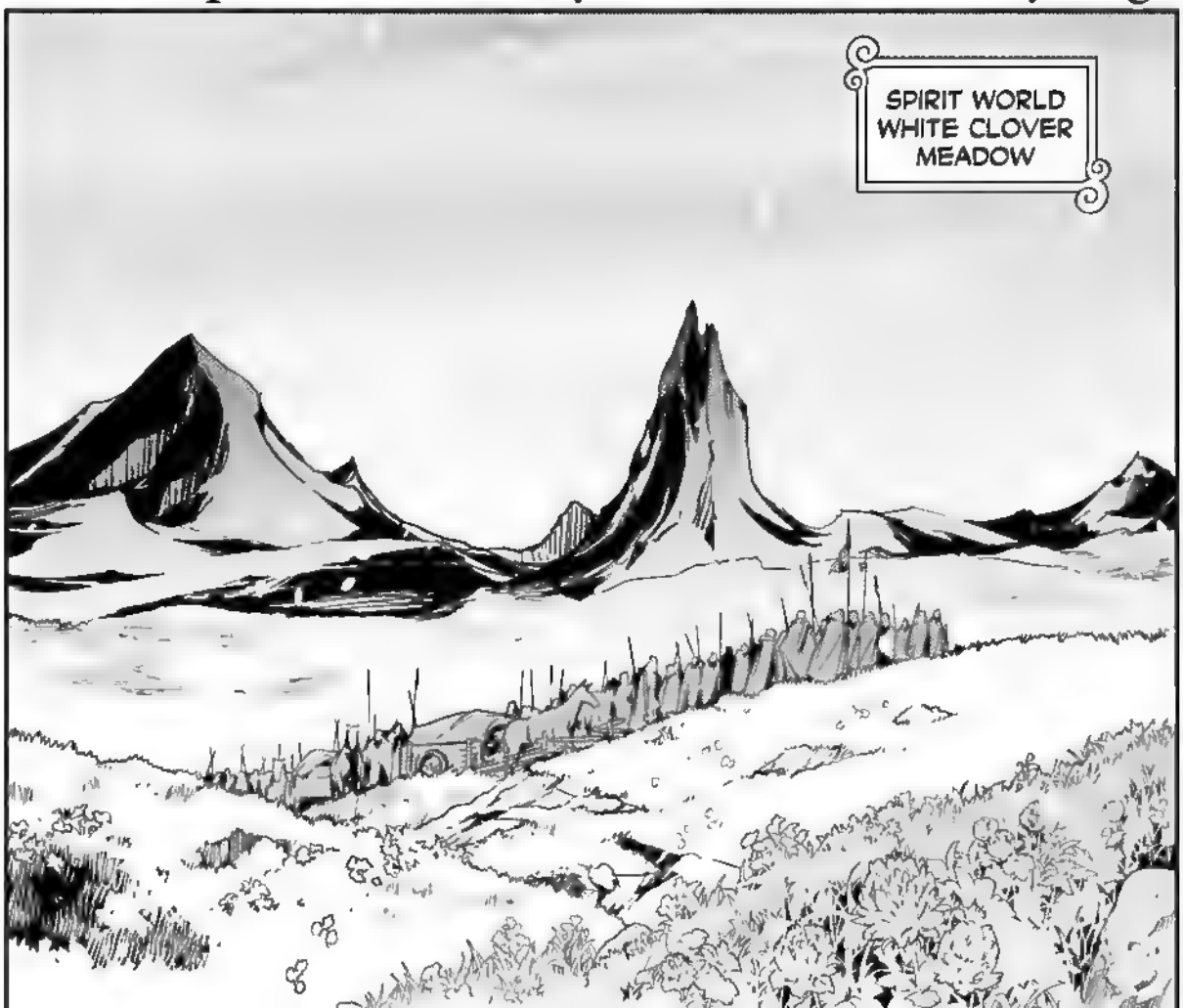

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
THE STARS.

WHAT ARE STARS?
...HMM.
IT'S MYSTE-RIOUS.
REALLY?
THE OLDER YOU GROW, THE MORE MYSTERIOUS THINGS BECOME.

....
...YOU'VE BEEN QUIET LATELY, GRAMPS.
... YEAH.

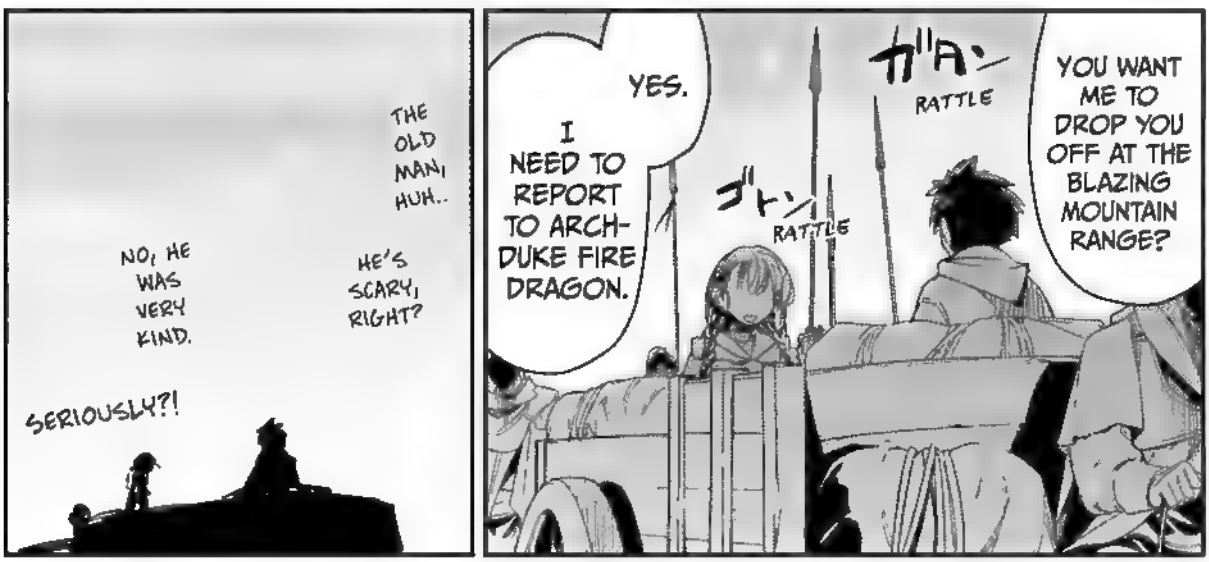
CHAPTER 49 Archenemy and Hero

Have Hope For Your Story That Will Someday Begin



THIS PLACE IS BEAUTIFUL.
MOST OF THE SPIRIT WORLD IS DESOLATE...
...BUT YOU CAN'T WRITE IT OFF SINCE IT'S GOT THE OCCASIONAL PLACE LIKE THIS ONE.
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THE SPIRIT WORLD'S GEOGRAPHY.
I'VE BEEN TRAVELING A LONG TIME.
MOSTLY FOR ADVENTURES AND BATTLES, THOUGH.
THAT'S HOW I LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT JUST GEOGRAPHY.
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE


YOU WANT ME TO DROP YOU OFF AT THE BLAZING MOUNTAIN RANGE?
YES.
I NEED TO REPORT TO ARCHDUKE FIRE DRAGON.
RATTLE
RATTLE
THE OLD MAN, HUH..
HE'S SCARY, RIGHT?
NO, HE WAS VERY KIND.
SERIOUSLY?!

IN WHAT WAY?
...HAVE I OFFENDED YOU?

WELL ...
UM...
OH, THAT.
IT SURPRISED ME.
HA HA HA
BUT IT WAS INTERESTING.
I CALLED MYSELF A HERO.

I SEE.
UM...
....
THERE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE JUST ONE HERO.
HUH?

YEAH.
THAT DID HAPPEN.
THEN THE LAKESIDE CONVENT...
...WAS FORMALLY RECOGNIZED AS THE CHURCH OF THE WINTER KINGDOM.

A LONG TIME AGO, YOU ONCE SAID...
...THAT THERE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE JUST...
...ONE CHURCH.

I'M SORRY.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY.
SO I THOUGHT...
...PERHAPS THERE DOESN'T NEED TO BE JUST ONE HERO, EITHER.

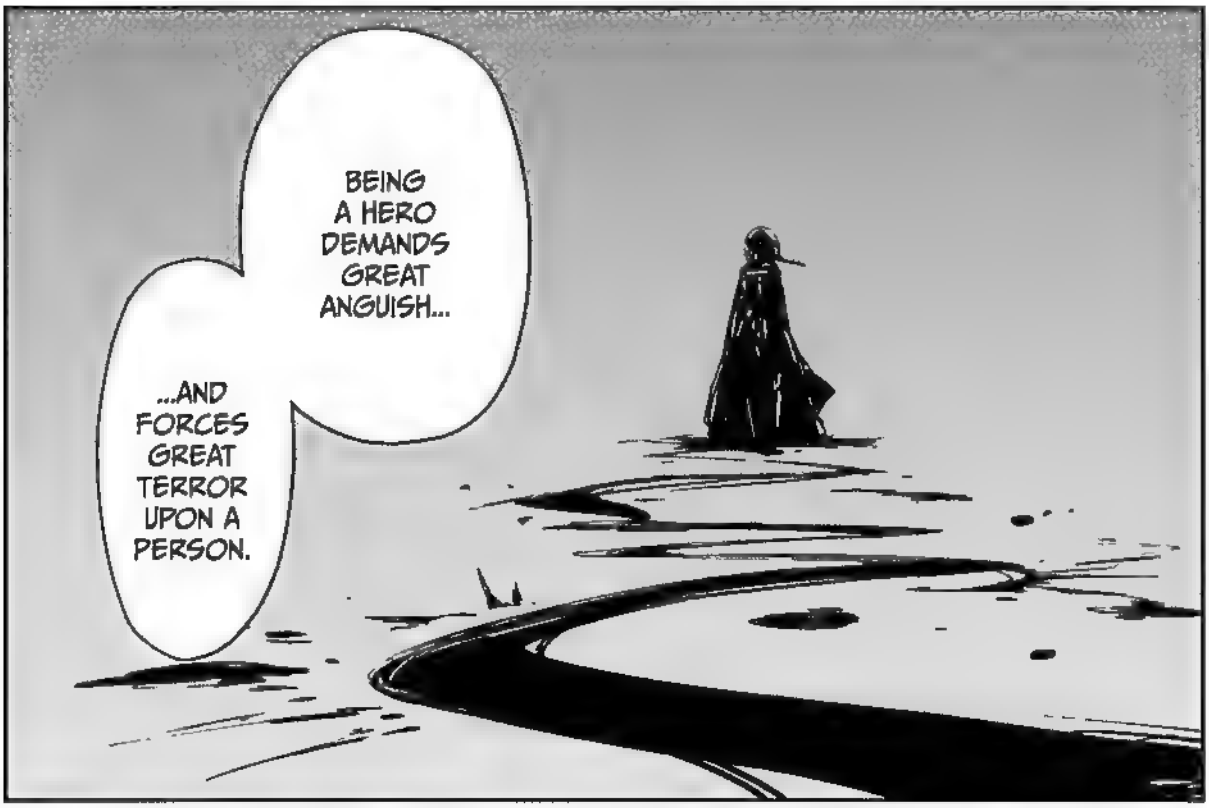
....

NO.
IF ANY-THING, I WANTED THE HERO'S SUFFER-ING.

DID YOU WANT THE STRENGTH OF A HERO?

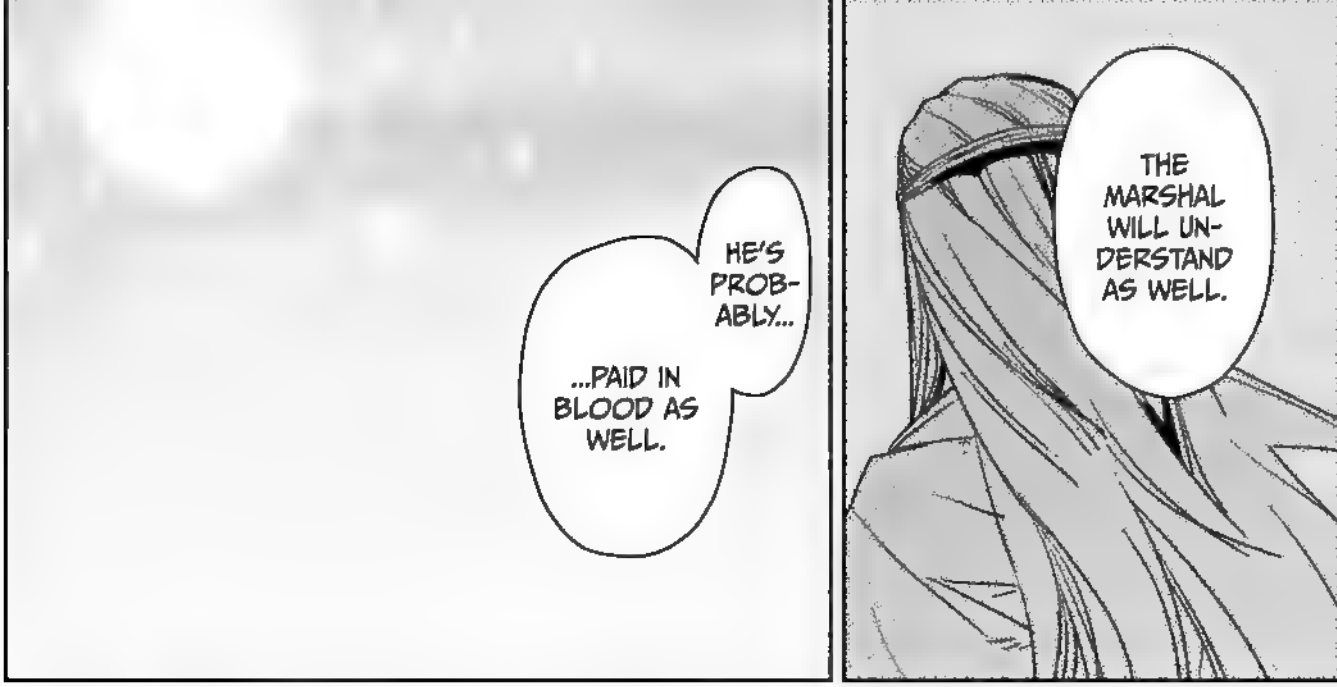
I THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE FORCING...
...OUR OWN BURDENS ONTO YOU AND THE MISTRESS.
I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SOME BURDEN I COULD CARRY AS WELL.
OR SO I THOUGHT.
SOME BLOOD I CAN SHED.
...AS THOUGH IT'S NOTHING SPECIAL.
YOU AND THE MISTRESS ARE BOTH KIND.
I'M WORRIED YOU MIGHT END UP SAVING THE WORLD...
I'M VERY CONCERNED WE MIGHT END UP THAT WAY.
LIKE SPOILED CHIL-DREN...
...WE MIGHT TAKE BEING SAVED FOR GRANTED.
I FEAR WE'LL FORGET TO AC-KNOWL-EDGE...
...HOW DIFFICULT IT IS AND HOW GRATEFUL WE ARE.

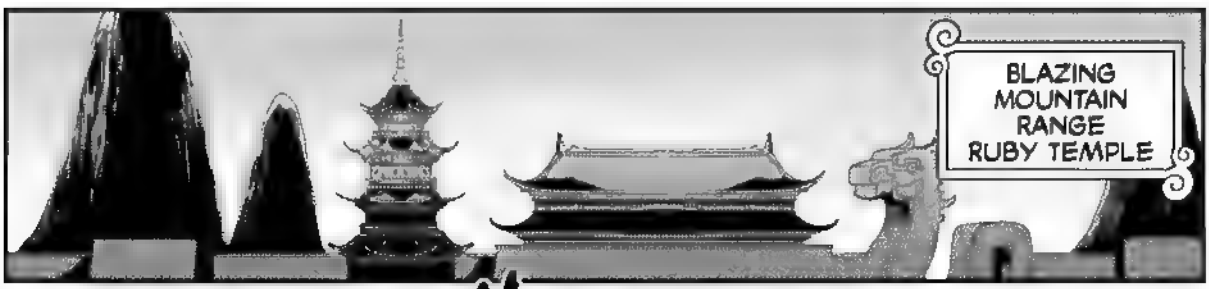
I CONFIRMED IT FOR MYSELF...
...BY BECOMING A HERO.
THAT'S NOT TRUE AT ALL.
YOU AND THE MISTRESS...
...HAVE GROWN TOO ACCUSTOMED TO SHEDDING BLOOD.


BEING A HERO DEMANDS GREAT ANGUISH...
...AND FORCES GREAT TERROR UPON A PERSON.

....
....
PLEASE DON'T STOP ME.

...JUST AS THE BIRDS CAN'T BE STOPPED FROM FLYING...
...WE CAN FLY OFF IN SEARCH OF TOMORROW.
...I KNOW THERE'S HAPPINESS TO BE EXPERIENCED IN THIS WORLD EVEN WHILE BOUND.
BUT...
BECAUSE WE'RE FREE...
EVERYONE KNOWS THIS.
NOT YOU NOR THE MISTRESS.
...THEN I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE MY PLACE.
AND IF THAT TAKES BLOOD ...

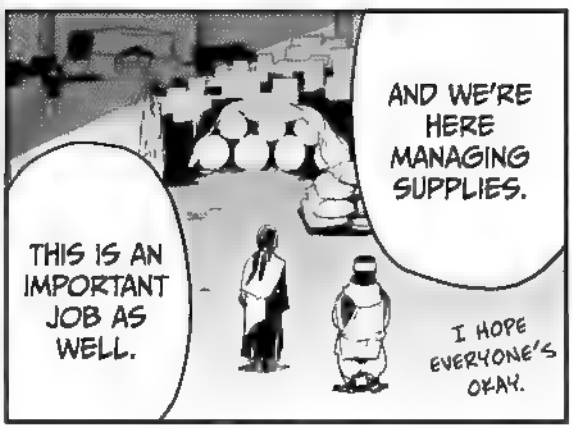

HE'S PROB-ABLY...
...PAID IN BLOOD AS WELL.
THE MARSHAL WILL UN-DERSTAND AS WELL.


BLAZING MOUNTAIN RANGE RUBY TEMPLE

WHAT'S GOING ON?

RRRUMBLE

THEY MUST BE FIGHTING FIERCELY AT THE CITY BY NOW.
IN-DEED.


AND WE'RE HERE MANAGING SUPPLIES.
THIS IS AN IMPORTANT JOB AS WELL.
I HOPE EVERYONE'S OKAY.

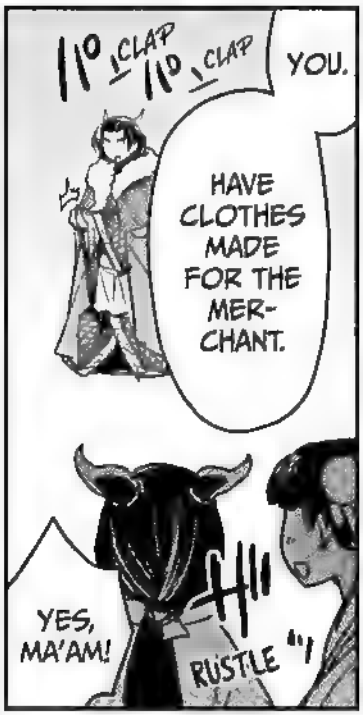
COM-MIT-TEE-MAN!
WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU COME FROM?
FROM THE SURFACE WITH A TRANS-PORTATION TALISMAN ...

HISSSSS

I'M SUR-PRISED ...
...IT HAD SUCH AN IMPACT ON YOU.
YOU'RE OVERRE-ACTING...
TATTERED

GRAB

DRAG
DRAG
DRAG


CLAP
CLAP
YOU.
HAVE CLOTHES MADE FOR THE MER-CHANT.
YES, MA'AM!
RUSTLE

OH, RIGHT.
I'LL HAVE THEM BRING A SPARE ALLIANCE UNIFORM...
MER-CHANT.
YOUR CLOTHES ...
THAT WON'T DO.

BY THE WAY, THIS HEAP OF SUPPLIES...
IS IT WHEAT?
YES.
WE BROUGHT IT HERE ON THE COMMITTEEMAN'S ORDERS.
IT'S A GIFT FOR ARCHDUKE FIRE DRAGON.
A GIFT?
UNDER WHAT PRETEXT...?
WE DON'T KNOW, EITHER...
DO YOU KNOW?
YES, MA'AM!
I'VE BEEN TOLD IT'S A BETROTHAL GIFT.
BETROTHAL?!

FA-
THER!
WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY BE-TROTHAL?
STEP 111
A BETROTH-AL GIFT IS A TYPE OF PAYMENT MADE...
...BY A MAN SEEKING MARRIAGE TO THE BRIDE'S FAMILY.

I KNOW THAT.
THEY WERE SENT BY THAT MAN.
PHEW ...
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE SUPPLIES IN THE STORE-HOUSE, YES?
I'M NOT ASKING FOR THE MEANING OF THE WORD!
....
ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN.
WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS, MERCHANT?
WHAT I'M ASKING IS HOW THIS SITUATION CAME ABOUT...
...WHEN NO ASKED FOR MY OPINION.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR COVER STORY.
IN THE MIDST OF THIS WAR BETWEEN THE OPPOSING FORCES OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION AND THE HOLY KINGDOM, IT IS DANGEROUS FOR THE ALLIANCE, AN INSTITUTION WITH NO MEANS OF MILITARY DEFENSE, TO POSSESS LARGE QUANTITIES OF SUPPLIES AND FOOD...
BLAH
...WITH FUTURE POTEN-TIAL.
YOU COULD CALL THIS A PRIOR INVEST-MENT BASED ON ADVANCED POLITICAL JUDGMENT.
IT'S A DEFENSIVE MEASURE MEANT TO SECURE OPTIONS...

WAS IT YOUR DESIRE TO SEND MY FAMILY A BETROTHAL GIFT?
...WELL, YES.
ULTIMATELY, THAT IS WHAT THIS MEANS.
MURMUR
MURMUR
IT'S A BLOOD-BATH
WHISPER
WHISPER

NO.
THAT'S DEFINITELY NOT THE CASE.

DO YOU WISH TO MARRY ME?

THE FUTURE STRETCHES OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS.
NARROWING THE FIELD OF FUTURE CONTRACTS BY ENTERING A PARTICULAR ONE NOW...
...IS NOT GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICE.

SO...
...YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF MARRYING ME.
BURN
THAT'S NOT THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION, EITHER.
WOOSH

I'M JUST DOING WHAT I THINK IS APPRO-PRIATE.
YOUR VAGUE ATTITUDE MAKES YOU SEEM LIKE A PETTY MAN INDEED.

I AM A FAITHFUL TRADING PARTNER.
I AM MORTI-FIED.
SO YOU'RE DETERMINED TO FEIGN IGNORANCE.

I UNDER-STAND.
....

?
?

TURN

I SAID NOTHING OF THE SORT.
YOU MEAN TO SAY BETWEEN THESE TWO MEN AND MY FATHER, WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH WIT-NESSES.

I AM GRATE-FUL, THEN.
YOU UNDER-STAND NOW?
WHEW

I'M NOT MAKING IT COMPLI-CATED!
YOU'RE THE ONE RUNNING IN CIRCLES!
SO WHY ARE YOU MAKING THIS SO COMPLI-CATED?
I DON'T UNDER-STAND!
I HAD TO MOVE THE SUPPLIES I HAD AT GATEWAY CITY AND PUT THEM UNDER ANOTHER'S NAME.
SINCE NO ONE WOULD FIND SENDING A LARGE BETROTHAL GIFT UN-NATURAL, I CHOSE THIS OPTION.
WHAT?
YOU'RE WRONG.
YOU'RE THE DEMON KING.
SHRIEK
I'M NOT RUNNING!
THEN SAVE GATEWAY CITY!
SHOUT
I'M JUST A MER-CHANT!

THEREFORE, IT IS NECESSARY FOR ME TO BECOME HAPPY.

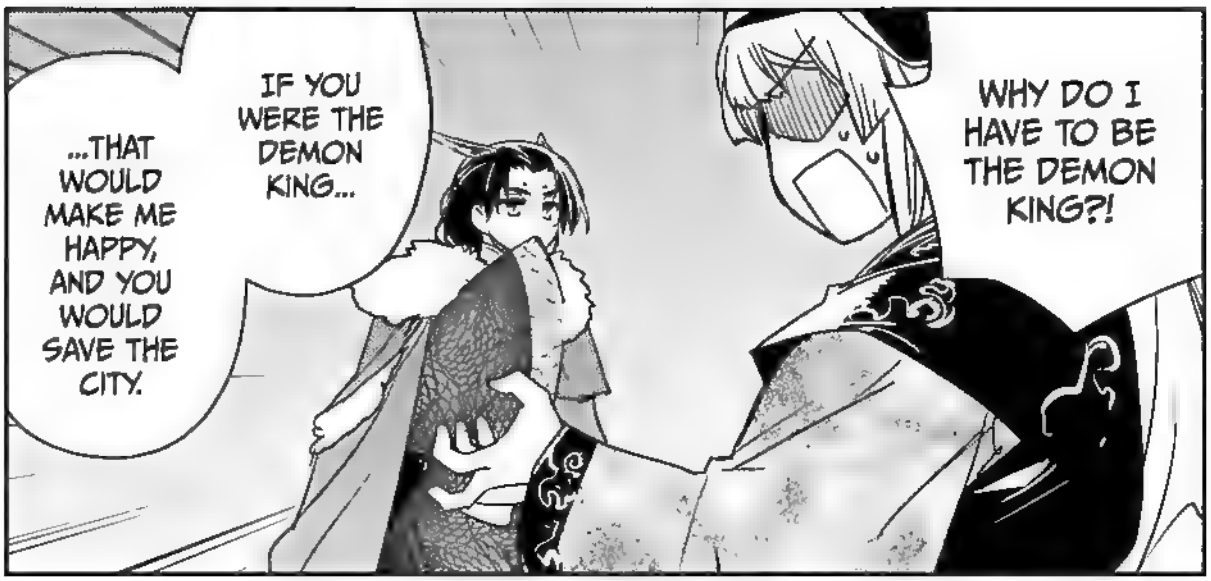
I PROMISED THE BLACK KNIGHT...
...THAT I WOULD BE HAPPY.

BECAUSE I REJECTED THE BLACK KNIGHT, MY HUSBAND...
...MUST BE A MAN FAR SUPERIOR TO THE BLACK KNIGHT.

...THEN MY HUSBAND MUST BE THE DEMON KING.
OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T BE KEEPING MY PROMISE.

IF THE BLACK KNIGHT IS THE HERO...

IF I MUST WED MY DAUGHTER TO SOMEONE...
...I ALWAYS PREFERRED A MAN OF REAL CALIBER AS WELL!
わはは
HA HA HA
BURN
はははははは
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA


WHY DO I HAVE TO BE THE DEMON KING?!
IF YOU WERE THE DEMON KING...
...THAT WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY, AND YOU WOULD SAVE THE CITY.

...ARE YOU FOLLOWING?
NO.
NOT AT ALL.

YOU PROM-ISED YOU WOULD.
YOU SAID YOU WOULD HELP ME.
YOU SAID YOU WOULD HELP ME FOR THE REWARD OF "NOTHING AT ALL."

VERY WELL.
I WILL BECOME THE DEMON KING OR WHATEVER ELSE YOU WISH.
HOW-EVER...
...THIS IS NOTHING MORE THAN WORD PLAY.
SIGH...
IT WAS A MISTAKE.

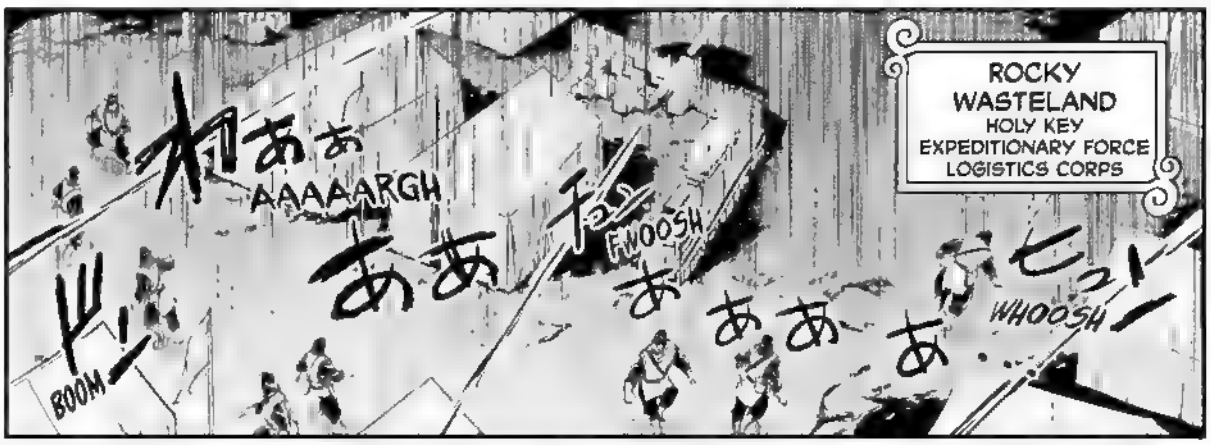
CHUCKLE
SAVING GATEWAY CITY IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MATTER.
CALLING MYSELF THE DEMON KING DOESN'T CHANGE A SINGLE THING.
I KNOW.
IT DOESN'T MAKE ME ANY STRONGER.
THEN I AM THE HERO.
WHAT?
SURELY THERE HASN'T BEEN A SINGLE MAN WHO DECLARED HIMSELF THE DEMON KING SO EASILY...
...UNTIL NOW!
HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
? ?
? ?

THE DEMON QUEEN IS STILL AT GATEWAY CITY.
SHE MEANS TO END THE WAR THERE.
FATHER.

SPEAK.
...I HAVE A REQUEST FOR YOU, FATHER, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL ENTRUSTED WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THE DEMON QUEEN.
TO DO THAT...

A KURUL-TAI?
HOLD A KURULTAI.

TO END THE WAR THERE...
...WE WILL NEED THE STRENGTH OF ALL THE CLANS.

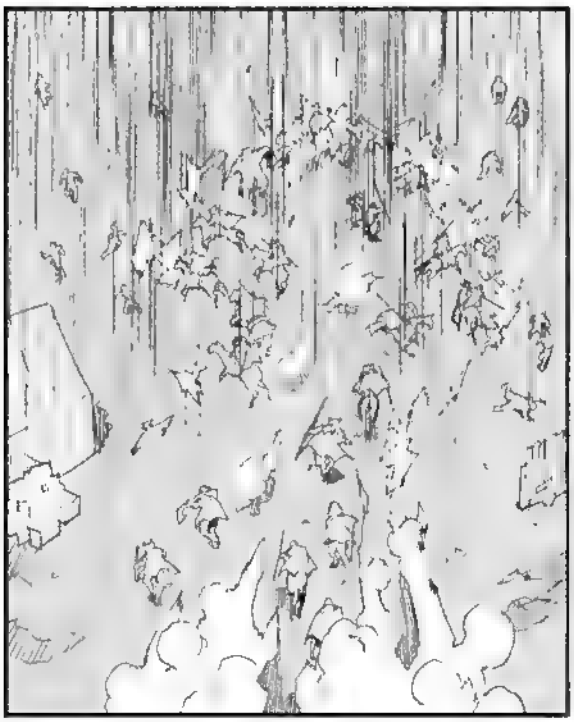

ROCKY WASTELAND
HOLY KEY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE LOGISTICS CORPS
AAAAARGH
BOOM
WHOOSH
WHOOSH

RUSTLE

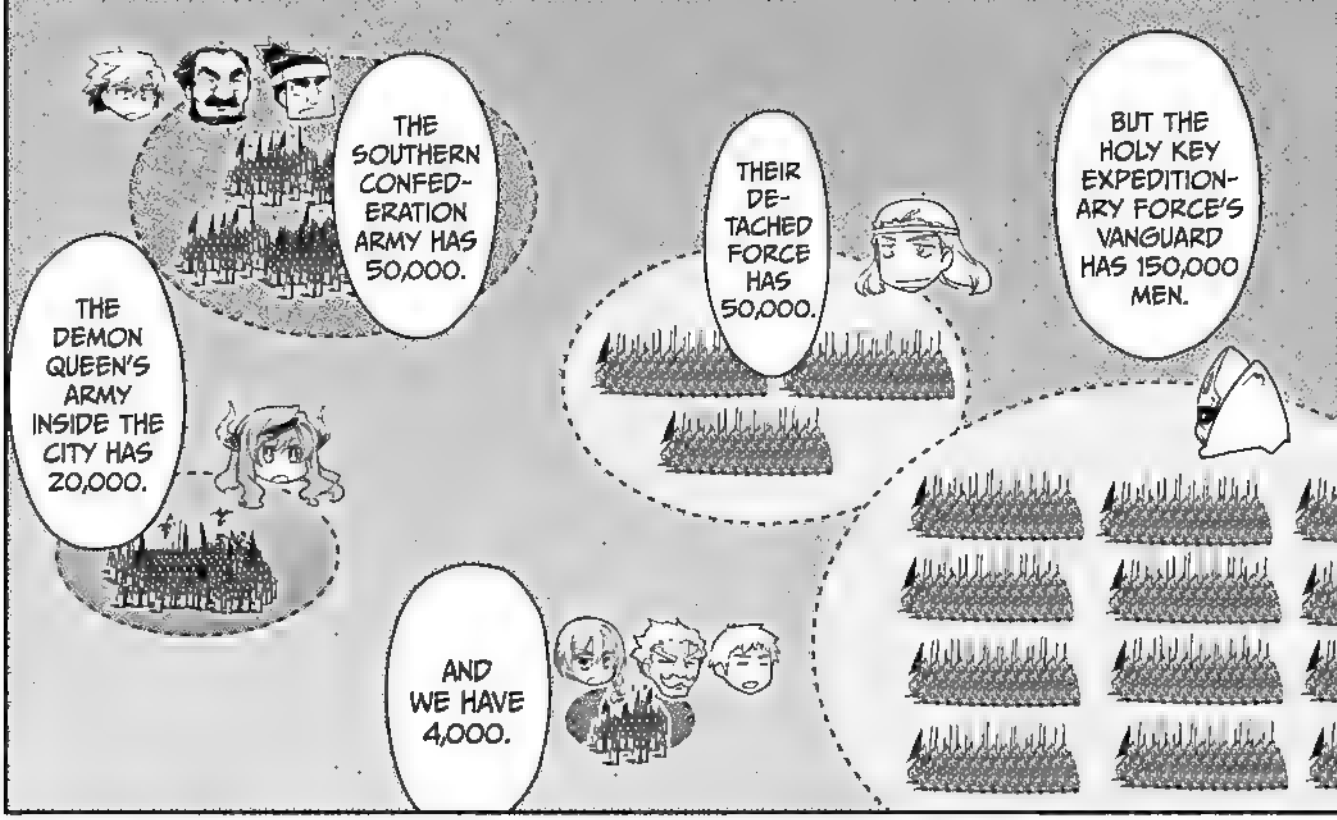
BOOM
DON'T RUN!
YOU SERFS!
TSK...
WHERE ARE THEY SHOOTING FROM?

AAAAAHHH
IT'S...
IT'S NO USE!
EEK
BOOM

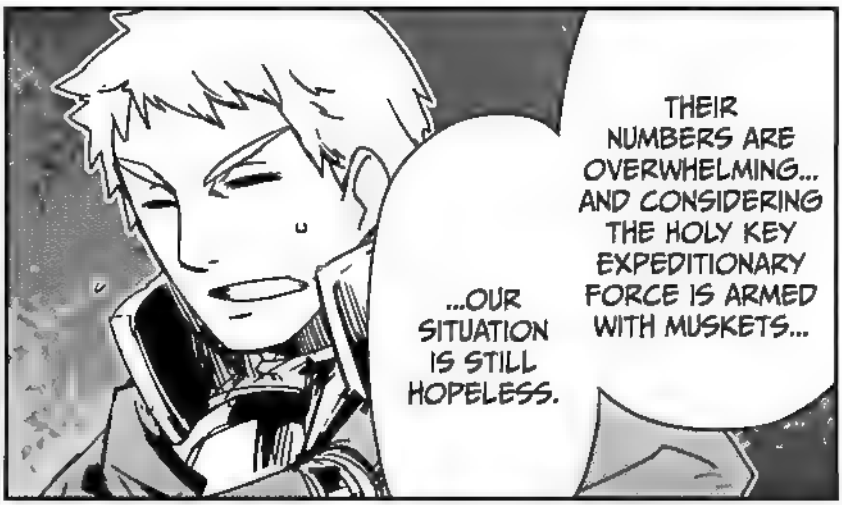
RUMBLE
YAAAAAHHH
RUMBLE



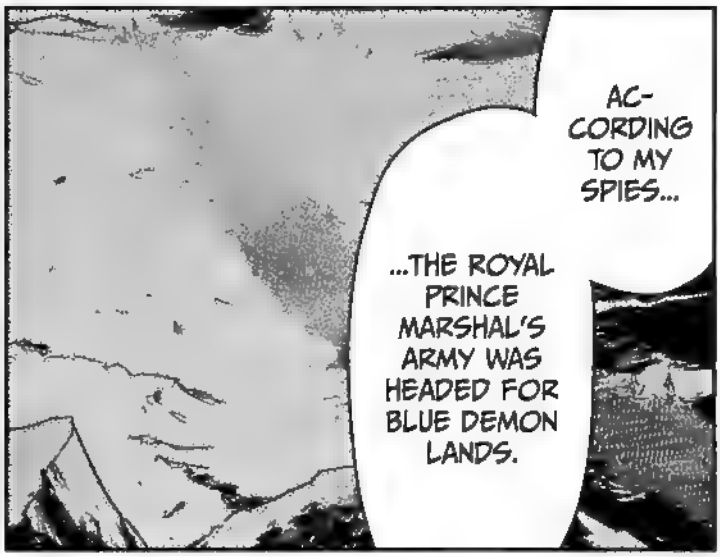
I COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU.
I'M IM-PRESSED.
WE TOOK THE ENEMY FAR MORE QUICKLY AND WITH FEWER CASUALTIES...
YOU FIGHT WELL, AIDE.
...THAN WHEN WE ATTACKED ALONE.
RE-PORT!
...WITH ONLY THESE SOL-DIERS...
BUT...
...NO MATTER HOW MANY SUPPLY LOCATIONS OR LOGISTICS CORPS WE FELL...
おおお
おお
OOH
FIFTY THOUSAND SOUTHERN CONFED-ERATION SOLDIERS ...
...HAVE CROSSED THE GIANT CAVE AND ARE HEADED OUR WAY!


THE SOUTHERN CONFED-ERATION ARMY HAS 50,000.
THE DEMON QUEEN'S ARMY INSIDE THE CITY HAS 20,000.
THEIR DE-TACHED FORCE HAS 50,000.
BUT THE HOLY KEY EXPEDITION-ARY FORCE'S VANGUARD HAS 150,000 MEN.
AND WE HAVE 4,000.

I HAVE A REPORT TO MAKE AS WELL.


THEIR NUMBERS ARE OVERWHELMING... AND CONSIDERING THE HOLY KEY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IS ARMED WITH MUSKETS...
...OUR SITUATION IS STILL HOPELESS.

BLUE DE-MON ?
FOR SUP-PLIES ?!

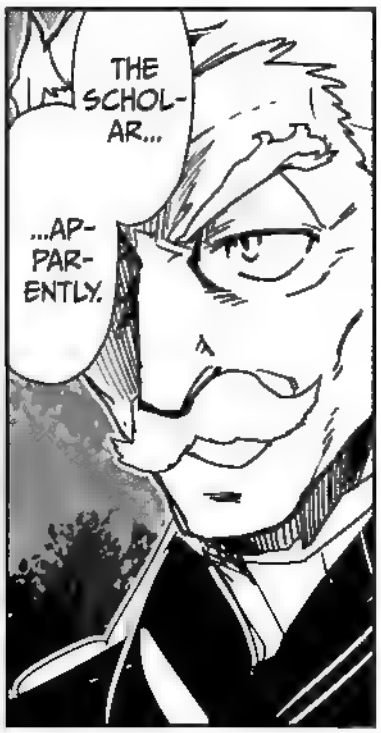

AC-CORDING TO MY SPIES...
...THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL'S ARMY WAS HEADED FOR BLUE DEMON LANDS.

GATEWAY CITY
BLUE DEMON CAPITAL
GATE
IT WOULD TAKE THEM TWO WEEKS TO GAIN CONTROL.
THE BLUE DEMON TERRITORY IS NOT FAR FROM HERE.
WE WERE CARE-LESS.

WHO WAS IT?!
FROM THE SUR-FACE ?

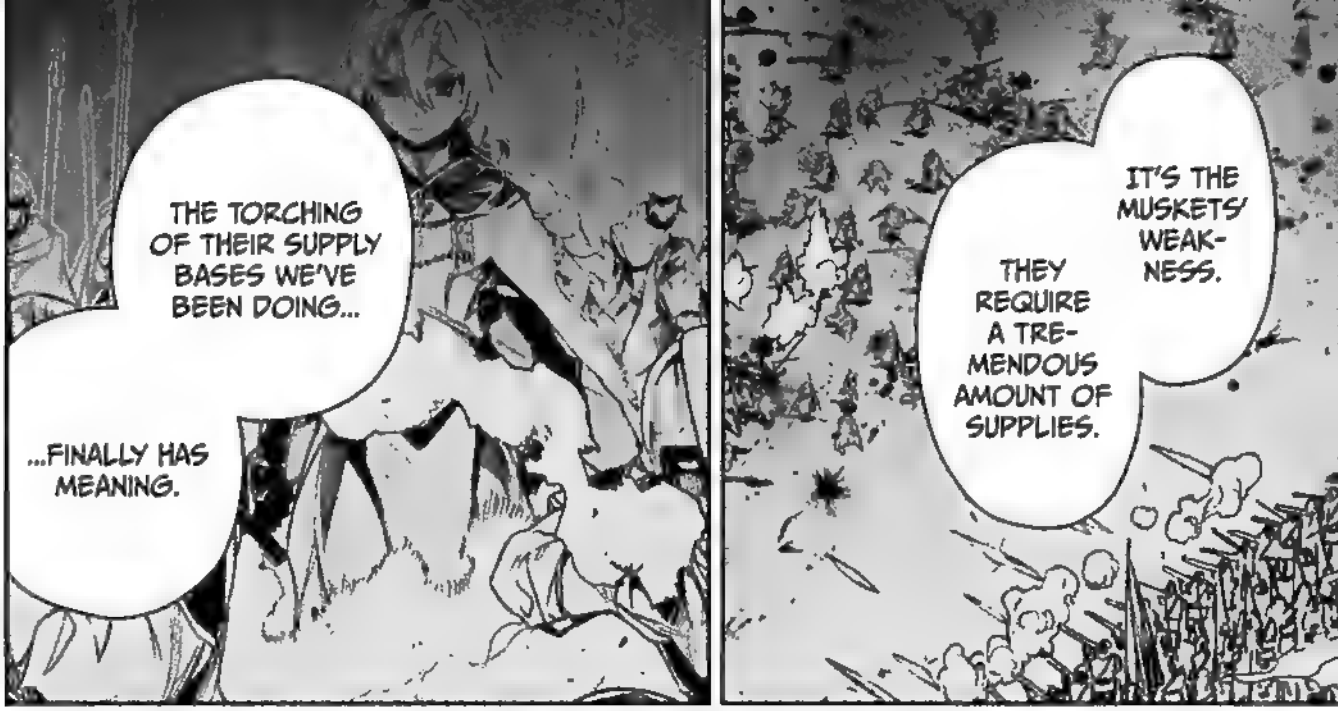
...A GROUP OF ENVOYS FROM THE SURFACE STOPPED THEM.
ACTU-ALLY...
THE THING ABOUT THAT IS...

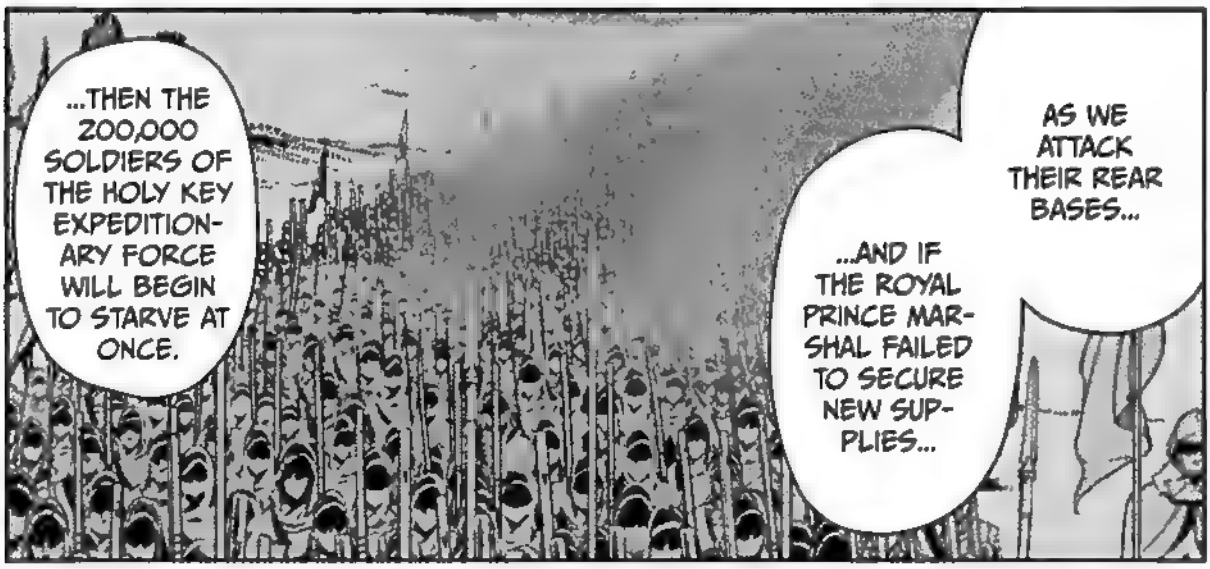
WHY WOULD SHE BE THERE?
ISN'T THAT THE DEMON QUEEN?
SHOULDN'T SHE BE AT GATEWAY CITY ?


...AP-PAR-ENTLY.
THE SCHOL-AR...

HUH?
OW OW
WHAT?
WHAP
WHAP
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, EITHER!
UNBE-LIEVABLE, RIGHT?
HEY!
RIGHT?
HA HA HA
NO, NOT HER.
THE OTHER SCHOLAR.
HEH
?
YOU'VE MET HER BEFORE, AIDE...
...AT DEMON QUEEN HALL.
BUT...
...THERE ARE FEW BESIDES HER WHO COULD HAVE DONE IT.
UNBELIEV-ABLE INDEED...
ALL RIGHT.
IT'S DE-CIDED.
WHAT?
WHAAAT?!
IT'S THE OLDER MAID SISTER.

IF SHE SUCCEEDED, THEN...
...THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL FAILED TO SECURE FOOD SUPPLIES.
SINCE SHE STOPPED THEM, SHE BOUGHT US TIME.
IN-DEED.
OR IF HE ACQUIRED ANY, IT WOULD BE A MEAGER AMOUNT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THIS IS AN OPPOR-TUNITY.
THE SITUATION THE DEMON QUEEN DESCRIBED HAS ARRIVED.

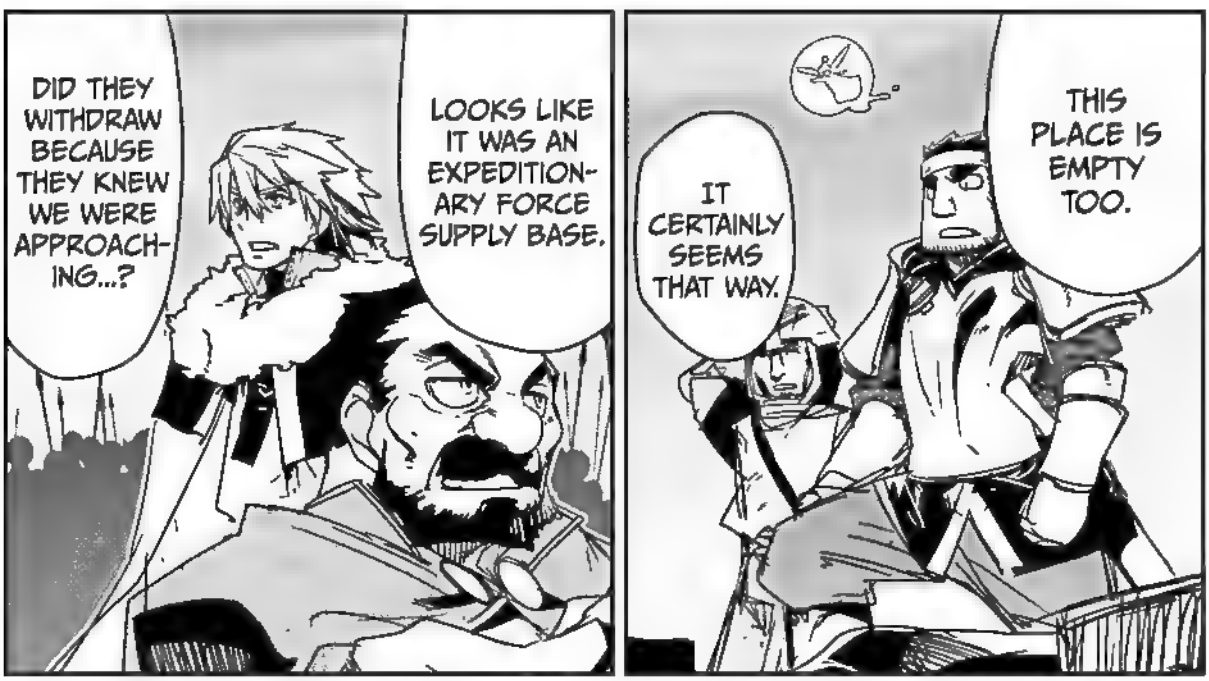

THE TORCHING OF THEIR SUPPLY BASES WE'VE BEEN DOING...
...FINALLY HAS MEANING.
IT'S THE MUSKETS' WEAKNESS.
THEY REQUIRE A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF SUPPLIES.


...THEN THE 200,000 SOLDIERS OF THE HOLY KEY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WILL BEGIN TO STARVE AT ONCE.
AS WE ATTACK THEIR REAR BASES...
...AND IF THE ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL FAILED TO SECURE NEW SUPPLIES...

AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE STRENGTH OF THEIR MUSKETS WILL DECLINE.

BUT SO LONG AS GATEWAY CITY'S WALLS HAVEN'T FALLEN...
...THOSE WALLS WILL BE HUNGRILY "EATING" THE MUSKETS' BULLETS.
IT WILL BE A LONG AND DIFFICULT SIEGE.
YES.
...THAT'S OUR CHANCE AT VICTORY.
...BUT THE SWORD OF HUNGER THAT WILL TAKE THE EXPEDITION-ARY FORCE'S FOOD AND GUNPOWDER FROM THEM.
!!
EATING MEANS TAKING.
THOSE WALLS ARE NO LONGER DEFENSIVE WALLS...

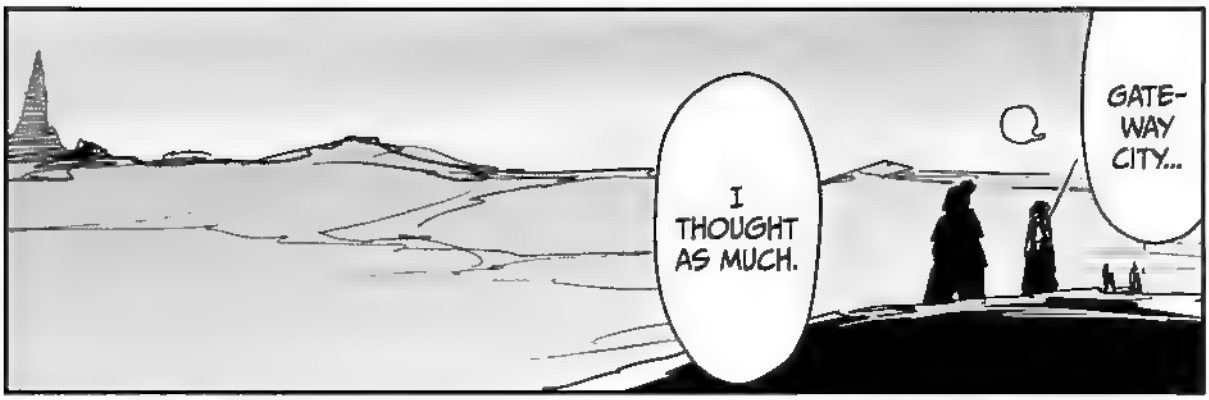
THERE'S NO WAY THE DEMON QUEEN WILL GIVE UP.
THE DEMON QUEEN IS SURE TO NOTICE.
SHE KNOWS, AND SO SHE ENDURES.

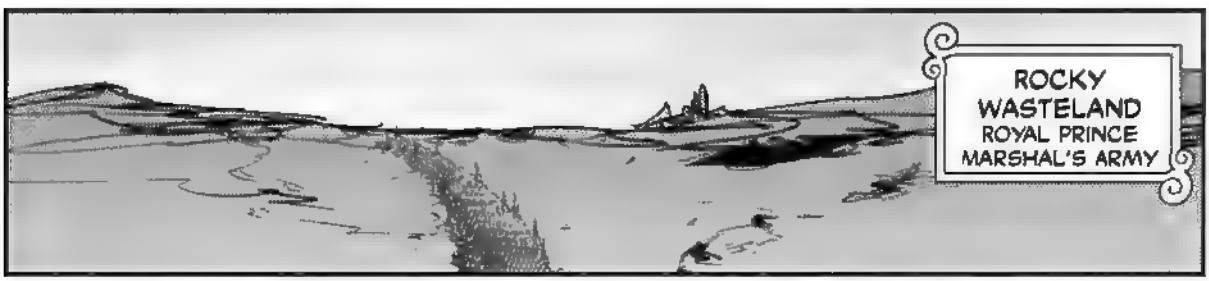

DID THEY WITHDRAW BECAUSE THEY KNEW WE WERE APPROACHING...?
LOOKS LIKE IT WAS AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SUPPLY BASE.
IT CERTAINLY SEEMS THAT WAY.
THIS PLACE IS EMPTY TOO.

OUR NUMBERS MAY FALL SHORT OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE'S...
...BUT WE HAVE 50,000.
IT'S A SHAME.
WHY?
IT SEEMS THIS PLACE...
...WAS OCCUPIED BY 2,000 DEFENDING FORCES.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL...
...BUT 2,000 AND 50,000 MOVE AT VASTLY DIFFERENT PACES.
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO CATCH THEM.
OH.
I'M SORRY.
I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE AN EASIER TIME LATER IF WE DEFEATED SOME ENEMIES NOW.
IT SEEMS AN EARLIER VISITOR DROVE THE COMPANY AWAY FROM THIS PLACE...
THIS LOOKS LIKE THE WORK OF MY HARSH MISTRESS.
IS THIS...
...SIGNS OF BATTLE?

IF YOU KEEP GOING STRAIGHT...
...YOU'LL REACH THE CITY RULED BY THE DEMON QUEEN.

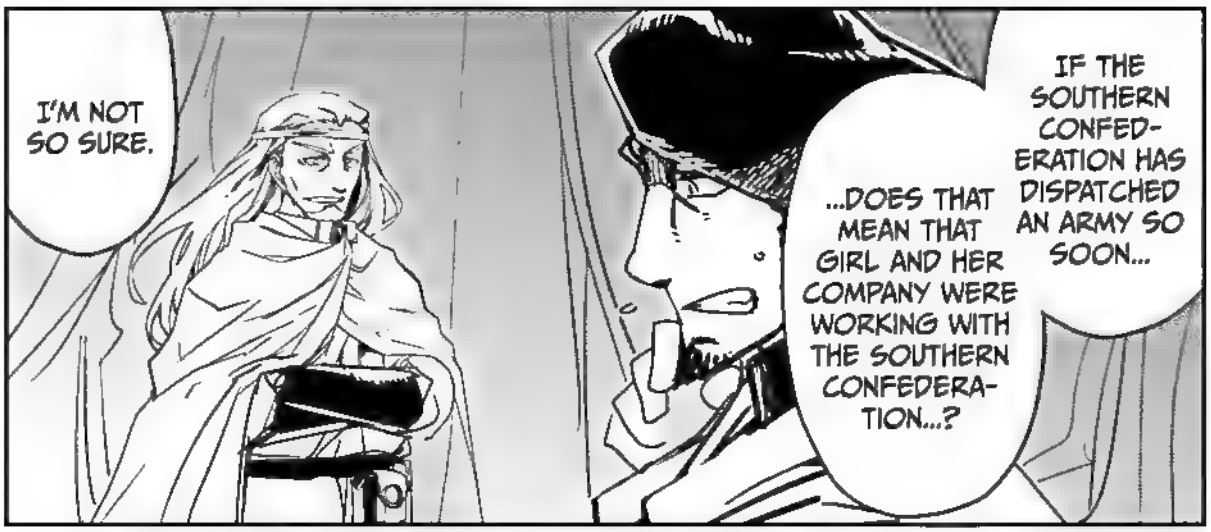
THEY PROBABLY MEAN TO REJOIN THE MAIN FORCE.
WHERE DID THEY GO?
EXPEDI-TIONARY FORCE ?


I THOUGHT AS MUCH.
GATE-WAY CITY...


ROCKY WASTELAND
ROYAL PRINCE MARSHAL'S ARMY

THERE'S NO POINT IN TALKING ABOUT IT NOW.
TSK.
IF ONLY THE ARCH-BISHOP HADN'T IN-TERFERED AND ORDERED ALL OUR FORCES TO THE FRONT LINES.
THIS IS WHY YOU IN-SISTED ON LEAVING A DEFENDING FORCE AT THE GIANT CAVE...

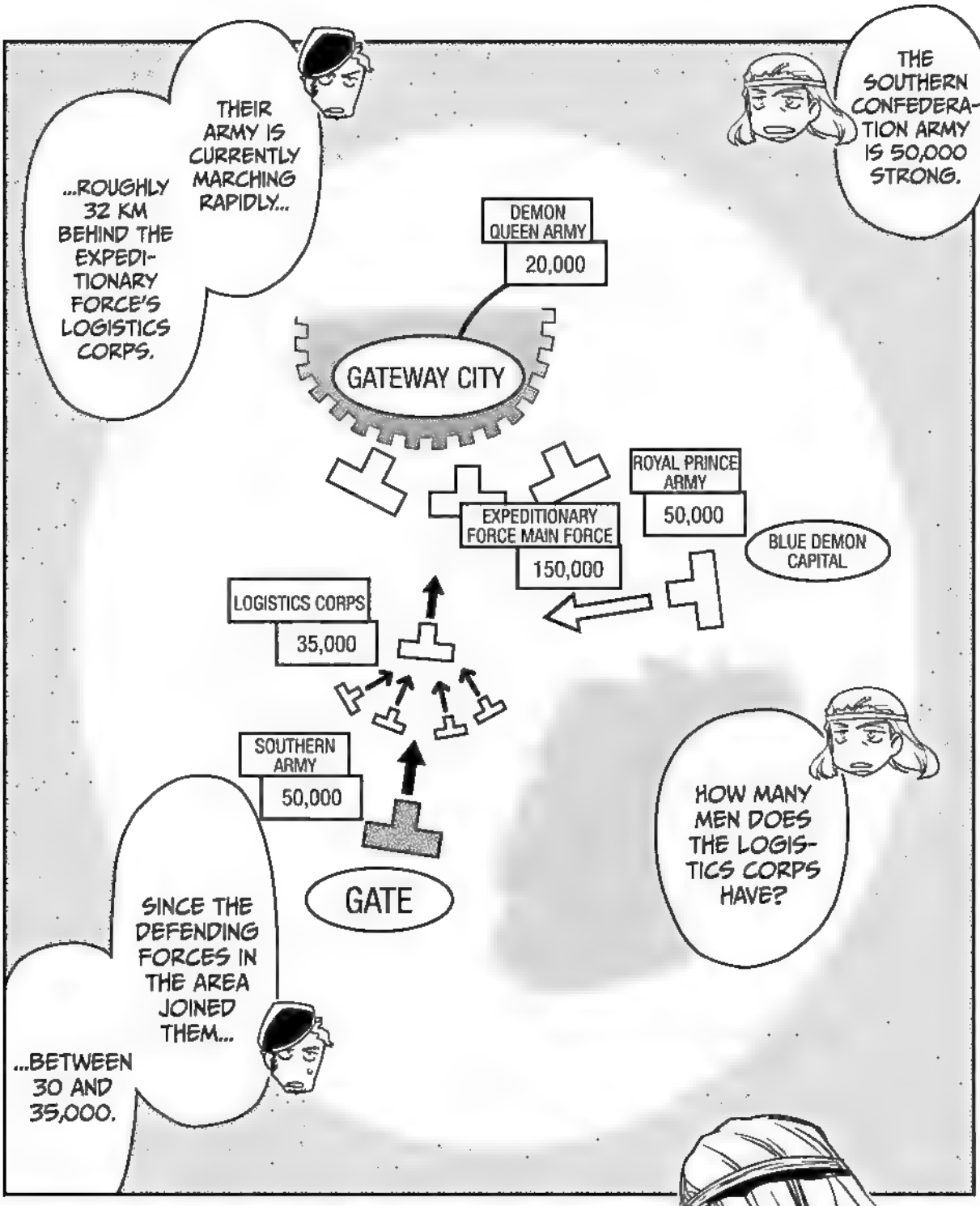
THE SOUTHERN ARMY HAS ENTERED THE SPIRIT WORLD?!
OUR SUPPLY POINTS HAVE FALLEN?


I'M NOT SO SURE.
...DOES THAT MEAN THAT GIRL AND HER COMPANY WERE WORKING WITH THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION...?
IF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION HAS DISPATCHED AN ARMY SO SOON...

IF SHE WERE SERVING ANOTHER, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO IMPOSING.
THAT SCHOLAR BORE HER OWN WILL IN HER EYES.

BUT...
...THE ARMY BEFORE US IS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

....
YOU'RE RIGHT.
SHE IS THE COMMANDER OF AN ARMY.
NOT A SERVANT.

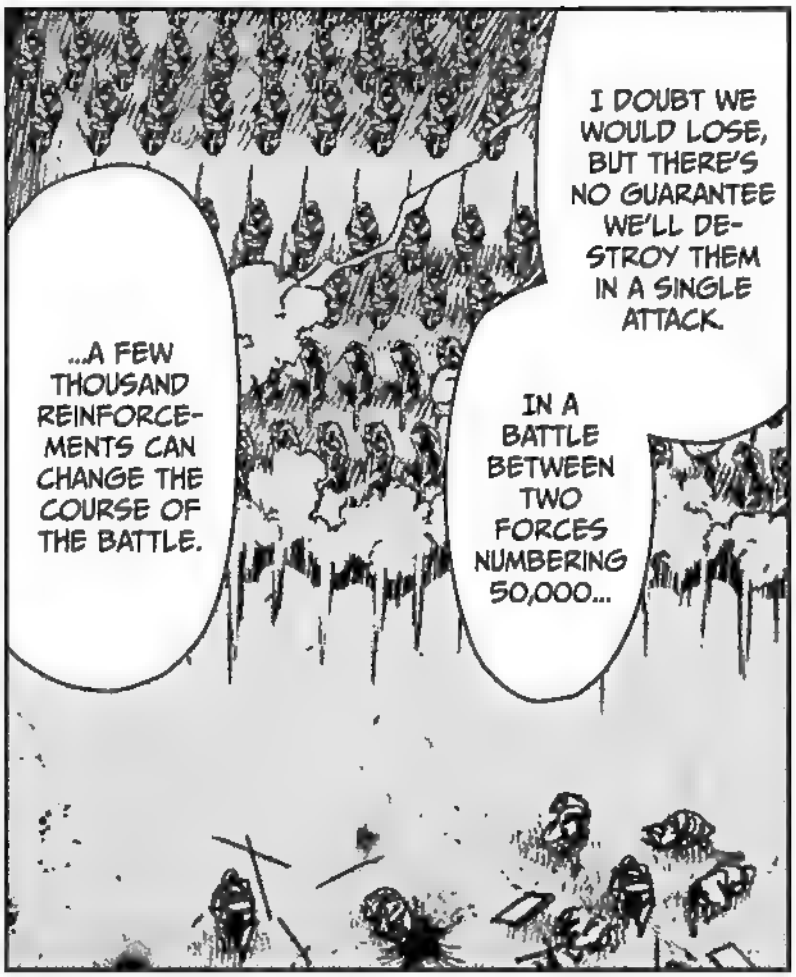

THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION ARMY IS 50,000 STRONG.
THEIR ARMY IS CURRENTLY MARCHING RAPIDLY...
...ROUGHLY 32 KM BEHIND THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE'S LOGISTICS CORPS.
DEMON QUEEN ARMY
20,000
GATEWAY CITY
ROYAL PRINCE ARMY
50,000
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE MAIN FORCE
150,000
BLUE DEMON CAPITAL
LOGISTICS CORPS
35,000
SOUTHERN ARMY
50,000
GATE
HOW MANY MEN DOES THE LOGISTICS CORPS HAVE?
SINCE THE DEFENDING FORCES IN THE AREA JOINED THEM...
...BETWEEN 30 AND 35,000.

WE SHOULD ENGAGE THE SOUTHERN ARMY AND RESCUE THE LOGISTICS CORPS.
...HMPH.

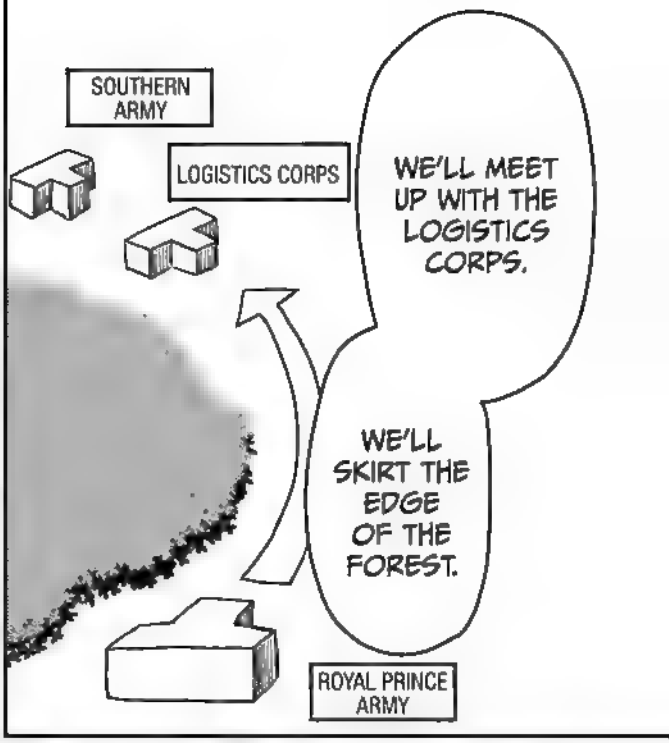
YOUR DECISION, SIR?
OUR 50,000 SOLDIERS ARE ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION'S 50,000 MEN!
I KNOW WE WILL DEFEAT THEM!
IF NECESSARY, WE CAN RE-ORGANIZE THE 35,000 MEN OF THE LOGISTICS CORPS...
...AND HAVE THEM BRING UP THE REAR.
IT'S ODD.
?
WHAT'S WRONG?
....
PERHAPS THEY'RE ATTACKING WITH THEIR CAVALRY WHILE THE MAIN FORCE PURSUES THEM...
150,000
LOGISTICS CORPS
35,000
SOUTHERN ARMY
50,000
GATE
IF THEY FOUGHT EACH OTHER, THEN WHY ARE THERE 32 KM BETWEEN THEM?
32 KM IS MORE THAN AN ARMY CAN TRAVEL IN A DAY.
ISN'T THAT TOO MUCH SPACE BETWEEN THEM IF THEY TRULY ARE GIVING CHASE?

MURMUR
MURMUR
BUT TO ROUT A COMPANY OF 35,000 MUSKETMEN, HOW LARGE A CAVALRY FORCE...
...MUST THEY HAVE?
AND CAN SUCH A CAVALRY FORCE...
...BE SUPPORTED BY AN ARMY OF 50,000?
!
BESIDES, WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT WE'RE SADDLED WITH THE BLUE DEMON LANDS NOW.
IN OTHER WORDS, THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION'S DETACHED FORCE LED BY THAT SCHOLAR.
WHETHER IT'S FIVE OR 10,000...
...THERE CAN'T BE MANY OF THEM.
BUT IF WE ALLOW THEIR ALLIES TO ACT FREELY...
...THEN IT'S POSSIBLE THEY'LL FLANK US.

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THEY'VE SEEN MUSKETS BEFORE.
THE SOUTHERN CONFED-ERATION'S FORCE HAS 50,000 MEN.
THE GREATER PROBLEM STILL IS THAT THIS IS THE SUBTERRA-NEAN WORLD.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF ARMIES WILL APPEAR.


...A FEW THOUSAND REINFORCE-MENTS CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE BATTLE.
I DOUBT WE WOULD LOSE, BUT THERE'S NO GUARANTEE WE'LL DE-STROY THEM IN A SINGLE ATTACK.
IN A BATTLE BETWEEN TWO FORCES NUMBERING 50,000...

I SEE.
YOU MEAN THIS PATH?
IT'S POSSIBLE WE'LL BE ATTACKED FROM THE FOREST.
KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON OUR LEFT SIDE.


SOUTHERN ARMY
LOGISTICS CORPS
WE'LL MEET UP WITH THE LOGISTICS CORPS.
WE'LL SKIRT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.
ROYAL PRINCE ARMY

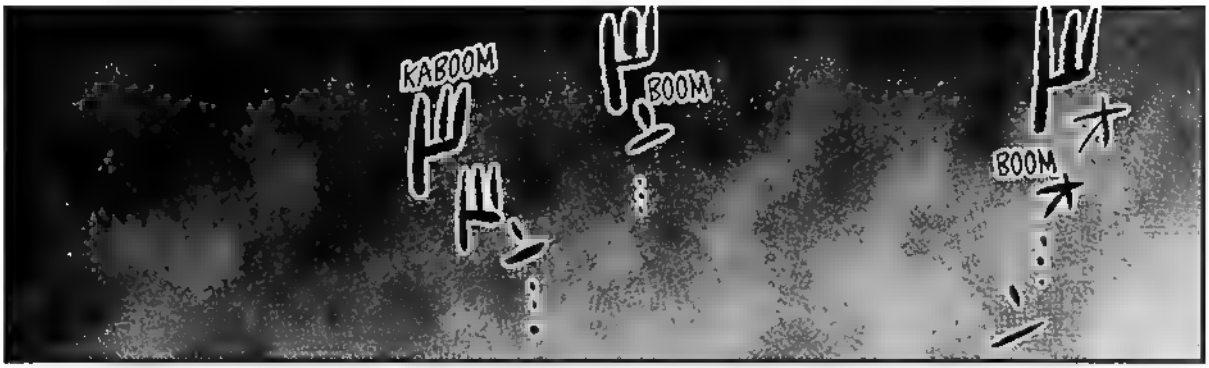
SEND OUT THE SCOUTS AGAIN.
DON'T FORGET THAT WE'RE IN ENEMY TERRITORY.

I'LL ISSUE THE ORDER TO THE ENTIRE ARMY.

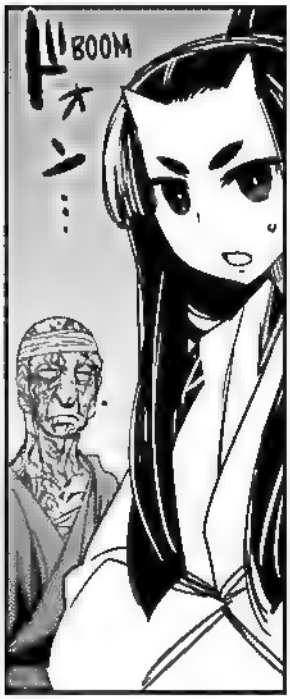
SALUTE!!!
YES, SIR!
AS YOU COM-MAND!

NO MATTER WHO SEEKS TO CONTROL THE SUBTERRANEAN WORLD...
...THEY WILL FACE JUDGMENT IN THE FORM OF MUSKET FIRE.

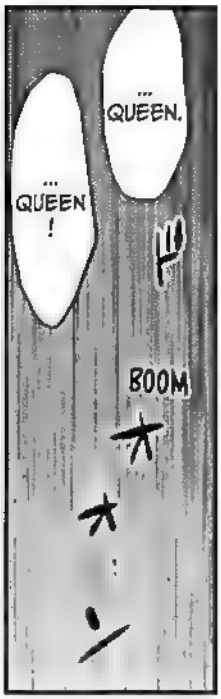
THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATION... IS IT THAT WOMAN'S ARMY?
OR HAVE THE IRON FIST KING AND LONELY WINTER KING GONE TO WAR?
IT DOESN'T MATTER EITHER WAY.


KABOOM
BOOM
BOOM

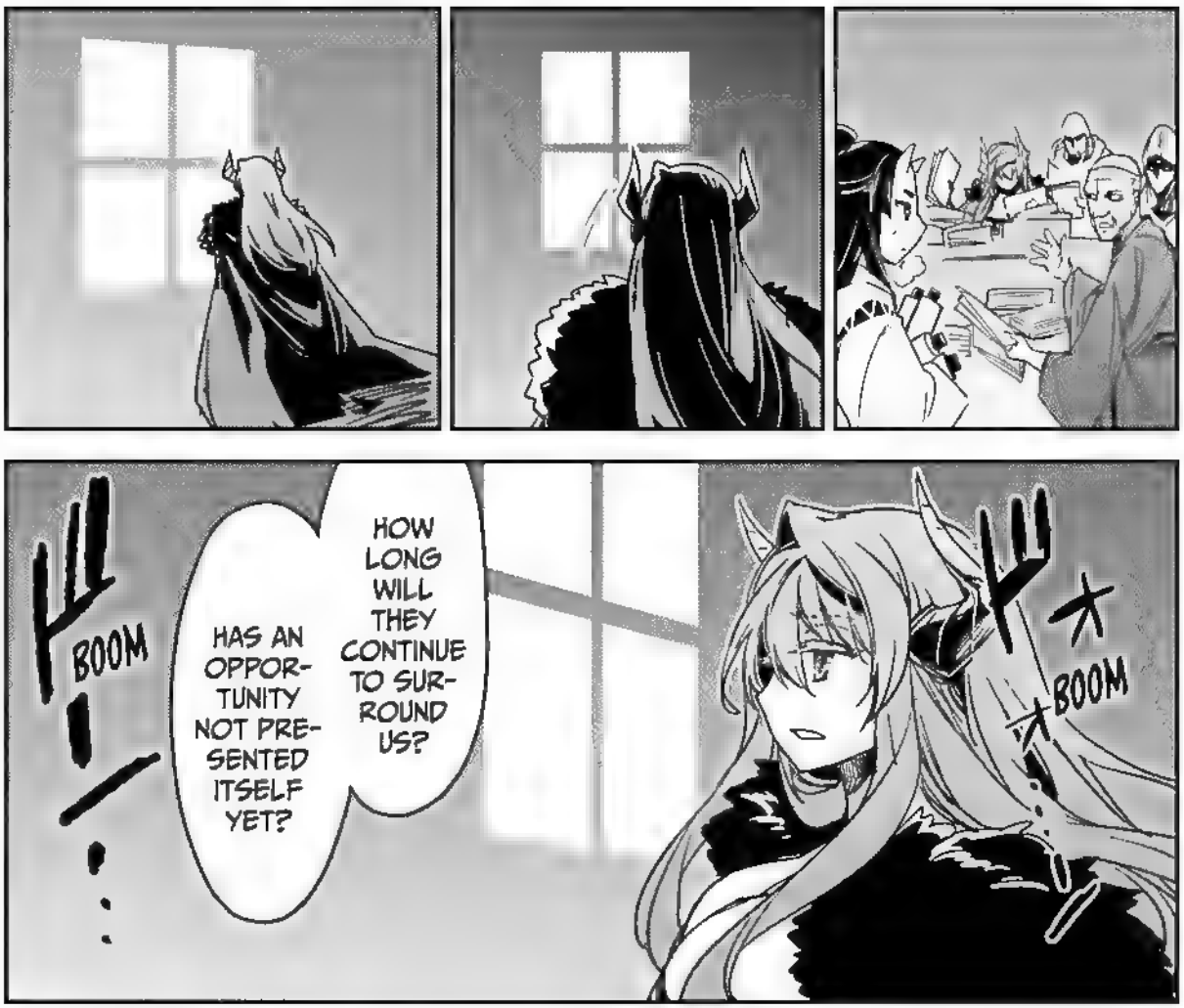
I'M SORRY.
PLEASE CONTINUE.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YOU SEEM TIRED.


BOOM

DEMON QUEEN!


... QUEEN.
... QUEEN!
BOOM

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP.
IS IT THE CANNONS?
BOOM
THEY CERTAINLY DO PRODUCE A TERRIFYING NOISE.
I DON'T BLAME YOU.
IT'S NOT THAT.
I'M UNABLE TO SEE THE ONE I WANT TO SEE.
THAT'S ALL.
....
IS THAT...
I'M JOKING.
FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.
I BRING A REPORT FROM THE WALLS.
THIS EVENING WE COMPLETED EMERGENCY REPAIRS ON THE CRACKS IN THE THIRD SOUTH WALL.
IF POSSIBLE, WE'D LIKE TO REQUEST SUBSTITUTES.
I CAN SEND A COMPANY OF VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS STATIONED AT THE TEMPLE TO TAKE THEIR PLACE.
PLEASE DO.


BOOM
HOW LONG WILL THEY CONTINUE TO SURROUND US?
HAS AN OPPORTUNITY NOT PRESENTED ITSELF YET?
BOOM

HERO...

DEMON QUEEN.

HEY.
GRAMPS.
HMM?

HERO.
I DON'T NEED TO ANY-MORE.

EAT SOME APPLES.
COME ON.

MY TIME HAS COME.
YOU'RE LYING!
THIS WORLD IS ABUNDANT.
IF YOU LISTEN CLOSELY...
...YOU CAN HEAR THE QUIET WHISPERS AND MURMURS...
...FOUND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
..IT'S NOT SO BAD.
THAT'S WHAT I SAID.

....
BUT...
...GIVING UP HOPE IS A DESPICABLE ACT.
....
YEAH.
HERO.
ONLY FOOLS EXPECT ANYTHING.
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT...
...NOW?
HAVE HOPE.
IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, PROTECT THEM.
THE PEO-PLE.
THEY ARE NOT FOOLS, BUT IGNORANT COWARDS.
YOU'RE A FOOL, NOT A COWARD.
SO...
...SOMEDAY YOU'LL DRAW A WINNING STRAW.

MY LIFE WAS FULL OF REGRET AND DISAPPOINT-MENT...
...BUT IN THE END, THINGS FINALLY BALANCED OUT.
YOU KNOW, HERO.
I'M HAPPY WITH WHO I WAS.
NO!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT!
IT WAS FUN HAV-ING YOU AROUND.
WE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES.
YOU CAN'T ACT LIKE A SPOILED CHILD FOREVER.
YOU CAN BEG, BUT IT'S NOT HAPPENING.
HA HA HA

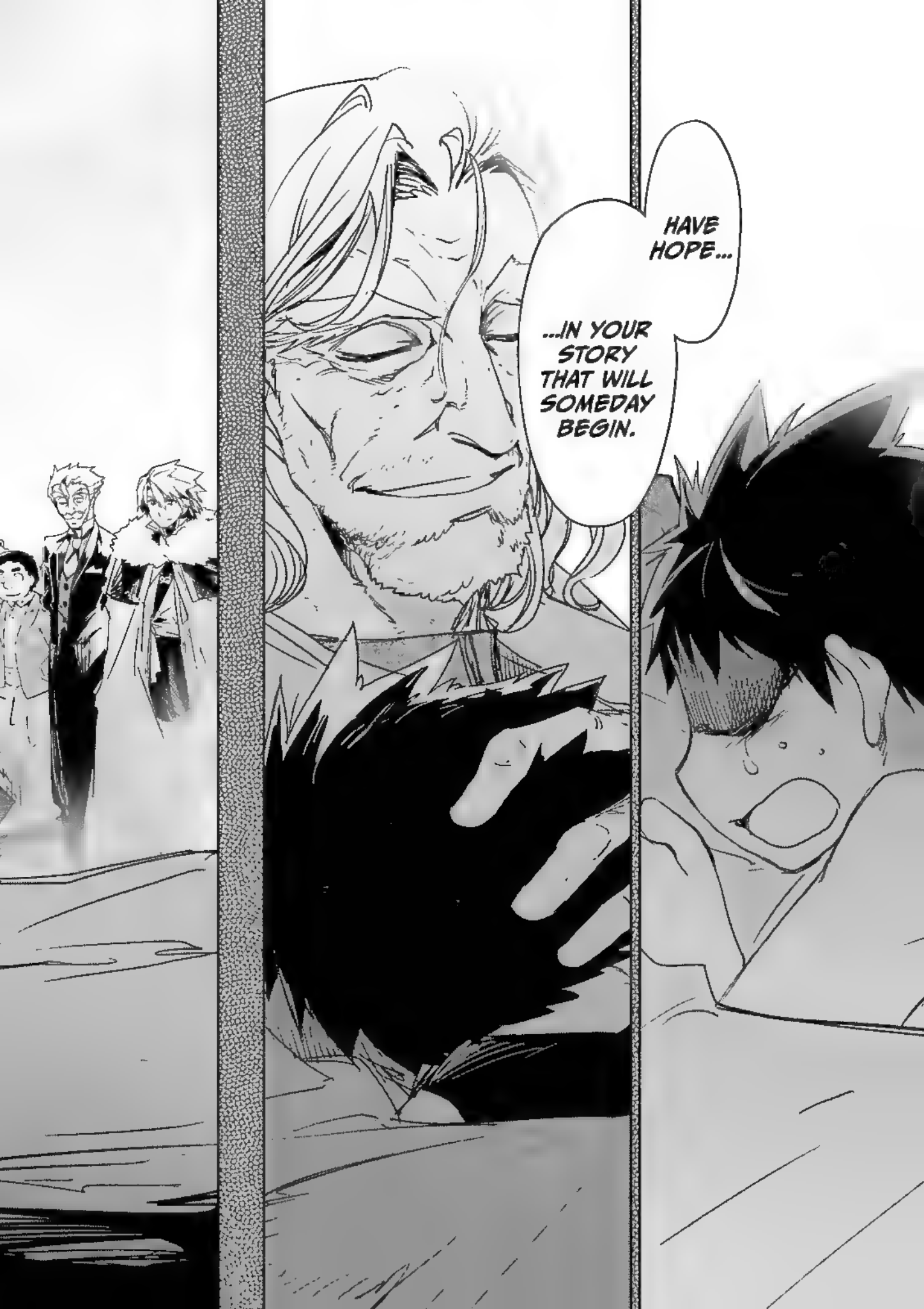
HERO.
THIS IS MY FINAL LES-SON.
YOU MUSTN'T EXPECT ANY-THING.
BUT...
...YOU SHOULD GRANT AND SEIZE IT.
YOUR FRIENDS ...
...THE PEOPLE IMPOR-TANT TO YOU...
...AND THE TIME YOU'RE GRANTED MUST BE USED IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.
ON THE JOURNEY INTO DARK-NESS YOU WILL ONE DAY TAKE...
...ALL YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU ARE MEMO-RIES.

HAVE HOPE...

...IN YOUR STORY THAT WILL SOMEDAY BEGIN.

THE END

CHAPTER 49
Have Hope in Your Story That Will Someday Begin


HAVE HOPE...
...IN YOUR STORY THAT WILL SOMEDAY BEGIN.

THE END

CHAPTER 49
Have Hope in Your Story That Will Someday Begin

ON THE EXCHANGE OF BETROTHAL GIFTS

The exchanging of betrothal gifts is a ceremony held between families when two people become engaged. It is the first step taken by the two families about to enter into a relationship with one another.

YES
WE BROUGHT IT HERE ON THE COMMITTEEMAN'S ORDERS.
BY THE WAY, THIS HEAP OF SUPPLIES...
IS IT WHEAT?
IT'S A GIFT FOR ARCHDUKE FIRE DRAGON.

Without Princess Fire Dragon's knowledge, Archduke Fire Dragon received a large amount of wheat from the Young Merchant under the pretext of a betrothal gift.

A JAPANESE CUSTOM ROOTED IN THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD

In recent years, "shotgun marriages" in which parties get married due to pregnancy are on the rise, but getting engaged and then married was once a worldwide tradition. Once a couple became engaged, the two families would hold a ceremonial exchange of betrothal gifts between them.

The gift exchange signifies the families' commitment to the engagement and involves an exchange of goods. In Japan, the first case is said to have taken place during the 4th and 5th Centuries when Emperor Nintoku married Kurohime, and in the imperial family this tradition has been passed down as an imperial ceremony known as the "Nosai no Gi" (Ceremony of Betrothal Gifts).

Years later during the Muromachi Era, the custom of exchanging betrothal gifts based on the imperial ceremony spread among the noble and warrior class, and the practice was systematized by Ise and Ogasawara, who presided over matters of etiquette. From the end of the Tokugawa Era to the beginning of the Meiji Era, the gift exchange became common practice among commoners as well.

Betrothal gifts typically consist of an odd number of gifts between five and nine. An odd number of gifts are given because odd numbers are considered "positive" and therefore good luck, and even numbers are considered "negative" and therefore bad luck according to Yin-Yang philosophy. However, in modern day society the original meanings have begun to fade, and new meanings such as "eight is the number of increasing prosperity" have been born.

Also, while in eastern Japan betrothal gifts are a thing "exchanged" between two families, in western Japan betrothal gifts are typically something "offered" by the groom's family to the bride's family. The types of gifts vary across various regions, but many of them are meant to signify longevity or prosperity. Giving gifts such as konbu or seaweed (written as "a woman who gives birth to children") for its fertility so the wife will be fertile as well, surume or dried squid (written as "a woman of good fortune") for its long shelf life so the couple will be happy for many years, and suehiro or folding fans (written as "broadening of good fortune and blessings") for their broadening form so the couple will experience increasing fortune are relatively common gifts in every region.

Furthermore, the terms "onobiryo" and "obijiryo" (written as "sash money") for betrothal gifts of money come from the fact that kimonos and sashes were once given as gifts.

During eras in which men were expected to provide for their family, it's thought that betrothal gifts were also meant to display the groom's financial power. Either way, the practice has strong regional ceremonial aspects, and it's best to avoid doing anything impolite to offend the other party.

The Young Merchant insists he did it simply to transport his goods, but overcome by Princess Fire Dragon, he accepts her demands.

FACE TO FACE

QUIET.
MIND YOUR...
...OWN BUSI-NESS.
OH, HERO.
PLEASE SAVE ME.
THIS WORLD ...
...AND THE WEAK...
....
...RO.
...ERO.
CRACKLE

Special Appendix

ILLUSTRATION GALLERY

MAOYU : Archenemy and Hero
"Become mine, Hero" "I refuse!"
Volume 15

KADOKAWA MANGA

Art by
Akira Ishida

Original Work by
Mamare Touno

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"KONO WARENO MONOTONARE, YUUSHAYO" "KOTOWARU!"
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